

NEWSPAPER REPORTING

J. PENDLETON





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NEWSPAPER REPORTING

IN OLDEN TIME AND TO-DAY

BY

JOHN PENDLETON

Author of "A History of Derbyshire," etc., etc.



NEW YORK

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" They were passing through the Strand as they talked, and by a newspaper office, which was all lighted up and bright. Reporters were coming out of the place, or rushing up to it in cabs; there were lamps burning in the editors' rooms, and above, where the compositors were at work, the windows of the building were in a blaze of gas.

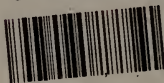
" "Look at that, Pen,' Warrington said. " "There she is—the great engine—she never sleeps. She has her ambassadors in every quarter of the world—her couriers upon every road. Her officers march along with armies, and her envoys walk into statesmen's cabinets. They are ubiquitous. Yonder journal has an agent, at this minute, giving bribes at Madrid; and another inspecting the price of potatoes at Covent Garden. Look, here comes the foreign express galloping in. They will be able to give news to Downing Street to-morrow; funds will rise or fall, fortunes be made or lost; Lord B. will get up, and holding the paper in his hand, and seeing the noble Marquis in his place, will make a great speech; and—and Mr. Doolan will be called away from his supper at the back kitchen; for he is foreign sub-editor, and sees the mail on the newspaper sheet before he goes to his own."—From "The History of Pendennis," by William Makepeace Thackeray.

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P R E F A C E .

 *HE English Press is, in our own day, whatever it may have been in the past, of great interest to the English people. It is their chronicler; its work is to give a reflex of their daily lives — of their enterprise in commerce, of their industry, of their government, of their struggle for a nobler social*

condition, of their happiness and misery. The English Press has had far more to do with the true making of this land than the horde of ancestors to whom the credit has been given ; for, notwithstanding its faults, the Press has done much towards lifting England out of the darkness of prejudice and ignorance. How it did it will some day be written ; but this little book makes no pretension even to dip into such a task. It is not a history of journalism. It is not a history of shorthand. It deals simply with the Newspaper Reporter and his toil,

pointing out how and under what conditions he does his work as the daily historian of the time. Considering the variety of that work, the many phases of society with which the reporter becomes familiar, and the strange incidents inseparable from his career, the story of his journalistic life should not be unattractive either to the ordinary reader or to the book-lover, especially as it contains many references to the quaint literature of the past, and indicates the change in the mode of recording events since the time when the old-fashioned

news - letter became neglected, and its place better filled by that new friend, instructor, and critic—the daily newspaper.

MANCHESTER,
March 1890.

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I.

Reporting in Olden Time.



NEWSPAPER REPORTING.



CHAPTER I.

REPORTING IN OLDEN TIME.

THERE have been reporters in nearly all ages of the world, for its people have always been characterised by insatiable curiosity—by an eagerness for news. The modern reporter—the self-reliant gentleman who dashes along Fleet Street at midnight in a hansom to a big fire, or drives rapidly to St. Pancras or King's Cross to catch the north express on his way to some disaster in Yorkshire

—is simply a development of the news-gatherer of centuries ago. The craft is an ancient one ; indeed, it has been maintained that there were reporters at the siege of Jericho—facile penmen who described the blowing of the trumpets by the priests, the shouts of the people, the fall of the walls, and the destruction of the city by fire. This contention certainly is creditable to the reporter's imagination, whatever may be thought of its veracity. But it is more reasonable to assert that there were reporters in Rome during the sway of the Cæsars ; that when Venice was in her glory reporters sped along the water-ways in gondolas, or sauntered near St. Mark's, collecting the light and learned gossip of the city ; and that scarcely had printing got a foothold in England than reporters began their tireless search after facts—a search that they are still continuing with marvellous zeal, ingenuity, and ability, in

the face of difficulties that would daunt many men, but only nerve them to further effort.

In his preface to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1740, Dr. Johnson says: "Everybody must allow that our newspapers (and the other collections of intelligence periodically published), by the materials they afford for discourse and speculation, contribute very much to the emolument of society; their cheapness brings them into universal use; their variety adapts them to every one's taste: the scholar instructs himself with advice from the literary world; the soldier makes a campaign in safety, and censures the conduct of generals without fear of being punished for mutiny; the politician, inspired by the fumes of the coffee-pot, unravels the knotty intrigues of Ministers; the industrious merchant observes the course of trade and navigation; and the honest shopkeeper nods over the

account of a robbery, and the price of goods till his pipe is out. One may easily imagine that the use and amusement of these diurnal histories render it a custom not likely to be confined to one part of the globe or one period of time. The *Relations of China* mention a gazette published there by authority, and the Roman historians sometimes quote the *Acta Diurna*, or *Daily Advertiser*, of that Empire.”¹

Of bygone reporting in China little is known. Probably the celestial recorders of current events had enough difficulty in deciphering the characters of their mystic longhand without rashly venturing upon a system of phonography ; but either a very

¹ The *Acta Diurna*, the daily journals of the time, recorded even the commonest events in the city, were written under the direction of the magistrates, and placed, with other documents of public interest, in the Hall of Liberty.

abbreviated system of longhand or a crude style of shorthand was early known in Rome, inasmuch as writers "were employed by Cicero to take down verbatim the speech of Cato in the debate in the Senate on the trial of those who had been concerned in the Catiline conspiracy." And of general reporting—such as paragraphs relating to important events—there are numerous examples in the *Acta Diurna*. For instance, there are several interesting specimens, translated into our own tongue, and given by Dr. Johnson in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, of the work of the Roman reporter in olden time:—

A. U. C., *i.e.* from the Building of
Rome, 585.

5TH OF THE KALENDS OF APRIL.

The Fasces with Æmilius the Consul.

The Consul, crowned with laurel, sacrificed

at the Temple of Apollo. The Senate assembled at the Curia Hostilia about the eighth hour; and a decree passed that the prætors should give sentence according to the edicts which were of perpetual validity. This day M. Scapula was accused of an act of violence before C. Bæbius, the prætor; fifteen of the judges were for condemning him, and thirty-three for adjourning the cause.

4TH OF THE KAL. OF APRIL.

The Fasces with Licinius the Consul.

It thundered, and an oak was struck with lightning on that part of the Mount Palatine called Summa Velia, early in the afternoon. A fray happened in a tavern at the lower end of the Banker's Street, in which the keeper of the Hog-in-Armour Tavern was dangerously wounded. Tertinius, the Ædile, fined the butchers for selling

meat which had not been inspected by the overseers of the markets. The fine is to be employed in building a chapel to the Temple of the goddess Tellus.

PRIDIE KAL. APRILIS.

The Fasces with Licinius.

The Latin festivals were celebrated, a sacrifice performed on the Alban Mount, and a dole of raw fish distributed to the people. A fire happened on Mount Coelius ; two trisulæ and five houses were consumed to the ground, and four damaged. Demiphon, the famous pirate, who was taken by Licinius Nerva, a provincial lieutenant, was crucified. The red standard was displayed at the Capitol, and the Consuls obliged the youth who were enlisted for the Macedonian war to take a new oath in the Campus Martius.

KAL. APRIL.

Paulus, the Consul, and Cn. Octavius, the prætor, set out this day for Macedonia, in their habits of war, and vast numbers of people attending them to the gates. The funeral of Marcia was performed with greater pomp of images than attendance of mourners. The Pontifex Sempronius proclaimed the Megalesian plays in honour of Cybele.

5TH OF THE KAL. OF SEPTEMBER.

M. Tullius Cicero pleaded in defence of Cornelius Sylla, accused by Torquatus of being concerned in Catiline's conspiracy, and gained his cause by a majority of five judges. The Tribunes of the Treasury were against the defendant. One of the prætors advertised by an Edict that he should put off his sittings for five days upon account of his daughter's marriage. C. Cæsar

set out for his government of the farther Spain—having been long detained by his creditors. A report was brought to Ter-tinius the prætor, whilst he was trying causes at his tribunal, that his son was dead. This was contrived by the friends of Cop-ponius, who was accused of poisoning, that the prætor in his concern might adjourn the court ; but that magistrate having discovered the falsity of the story, returned to his tribunal, and continued in taking informa-tions against the accused.

This is reporting to the point. It is true, it is terse, it is candid. The representatives of the *Acta Diurna* understood the art of condensation, and they possessed not only a graceful style, but an independent spirit. In these days the Press has great license, and says many bold things, but few modern editors would pass a sentence like this in the obituary notice of any prominent man :—

"The funeral of Marcia was performed with greater pomp of images than attendance of mourners."

It certainly reads strangely, and is a curious contrast to the attitude of the British Parliament years later, that Julius Cæsar during his consulship ordered the publication of the diurnal acts of the Senate and the people. He does not appear to have either harassed or insulted the reporters ; nor did any member of the Senate venture to use language such as Sir Thomas Winnington uttered against the reporter Edwin Cave and his associates in the House of Commons, on April 13th, 1738. "You will have," said Sir Thomas, "every word that is spoken here by gentlemen misrepresented by fellows who thrust themselves into our gallery ; you will have the speeches of the House every day printed, even during your session, and we shall be looked upon as the most contemptible assembly on the

face of the earth." Nor does Julius Cæsar, though he was not exactly a pattern of lovingkindness and tender mercy, appear to have subjected the Press to such indignity as our own Lord Marchmont, on whose motion in the House of Lords, in November 1759, the proprietor of the *Gazetteer* was compelled to apologise on his knees at the bar of the House for reporting that the thanks of Parliament had been given to Sir Edward Hawke for his victory!

The *Acta Diurna* contained many of the features that make our own newspapers attractive. They noticed not merely important but trivial events, such as, "A stage-play was acted, this day being sacred to Cybele." They gave accounts of murders, trials, punishments, elections, marriages, sacrifices, processions, imposing spectacles, the feats of foot-races, the encounters of gladiators, and the gossip of the time; but apparently they had not realised the value

of two items of modern news that never grow stale—the perennial account of the centenarian who can read without spectacles and retains his faculties to the last, and the thrilling story of the slippery sea-serpent that has successfully defied capture for the past century.

The *actuarii*, the Roman reporters, had comparatively little use for their stenography after Cæsar's death. The privilege of publishing the *Acta Diurna* was withdrawn; and from this period until the early part of the sixteenth century newspapers, so far as can be ascertained from available records, were practically dead. But in a letter dated Rome, September 1513, from the Cardinal of York to Henry VIII., about "The Battle of the Spurs," occurs this passage: "After this newes afforesaide was dyvulgate in the citie here;" and Chalmers, the author of *The Life of Ruddiman*, says there were news-sheets in Augsburg and Vienna in 1524.

But he admits that "the first modern sheet of news" appeared in Venice about the year 1536, that it was in manuscript, and was read aloud in certain parts of the city—a journal that proved a great attraction, for it was only issued once a month, and narrated, in polished stirring words, how the Venetians fared in their war against Turkey. The fee paid for reading this sheet in manuscript was a gazzetta, and the news-sheet gradually got the name of the coin. At least, Blount, in his *Glossographia*, published in the seventeenth century, would lead one to this conclusion, giving as the definition of the word gazzetta, "A certain Venetian coin, scarce worth one farthing; also a bill of news, or short relations of the occurrences of the time, printed most commonly at Venice, and thence dispersed every month in most parts of Christendom."

It was not until 1612 that the gazzettas of the Venetians first appeared as numbered

sheets ; but some years previously the thirst for news—now well-nigh unquenchable in every civilised part of the globe—had spread to England. The rich man retained a news-writer, really “our own reporter” of the time, who sent any interesting intelligence he could obtain in the form of a letter to his patron. But in 1588 the poor as well as the rich thirsted for news. The Spaniards, flushed with conquest and swaggering with success, were crowding on all sail to our shores. Queen Elizabeth had bidden them defiance ; there was anxiety, but not cowardice, in every English home ; the beacon fires glowed brightly on the hill-tops, but there was a fiercer glow of desperate courage in the hearts of our men both at home and on the sea, and every scrap of news about the sailors who had gone out under Drake and Frobisher to check the Armada was discussed in chimney corner by every fireside in the land. It was then that Lord Burleigh

adopted the sensible course of spreading information by means of a news-sheet ; and, notwithstanding the forgeries in the British Museum, such a paper was circulated under the title of the *English Mercurie*.

But to Nathaniel Butter belongs the honour of printing the first English newspaper issued regularly and methodically. He was one of the most accomplished news-writers of the seventeenth century—practically the first English journalist, a man of intelligence, foresight, and energy, a man indefatigable in collecting news. Had he lived in the present day, he would probably have been styled “a penny-a-liner,” one who sends news to the papers at so much per line, an industrious writer with stylus, and flimsy, and carbon paper, ever on the alert to get facts, to make manifold copies, detailing shipwrecks, tragedies, accidents, startling events of all kinds, and to send them broadcast to

every newspaper likely to appreciate his work. But as Nathaniel Butter lived before the age of daily newspapers, the scope for his talents was somewhat limited. Still, he made the most of his opportunities; and, after laboriously writing, say to "my lord" in Cornwall, about some gamesters' brawl, or to "my lady" in Yorkshire, about some love intrigue at Court, he determined to print, instead of writing, the news he collected, and the result was the issue in 1622 of the first number of the *Weekly Newes*. It was a novelty, and it prospered; the aristocracy still kept to their news-letters, and generally looked down upon the printed sheet; but the intelligence it contained was concise, interesting, and frequently startling. People bought it, though they did not always rely on the truthfulness of its contents; and the *Weekly Newes* may be spoken of as the first successful pioneer of modern journalism.

In this century, when science, giant-like, is striding resistlessly along the most difficult and intricate paths, scarcely a year passes without the adoption of some new device, to which everybody soon gets accustomed. Though superstition was common enough and education only flickered in Nathaniel Butter's day, there was much the same spirit of philosophy existing, the same capacity to adapt oneself to circumstances, and the newspaper, widely accepted, soon thrust itself into a far from insignificant position in English life. True, it was a crude newspaper, conspicuous rather for its imperfections than its excellence; still, it bore out the epigram, written in 1640, in *Wit's Recreations* :—

“When news doth come, if any would discuss
The letter of the word, resolve it thus :
News is conveyed by letter, word, or mouth,
And comes to us from north, east, west, or south.”

From all quarters, by flattery, cajolery, or

payment, Nathaniel Butter secured news for his paper, and much of it was more sensational even than can be found in some modern journals. Here, for instance, are two remarkable paragraphs that appeared in a seventeenth-century newspaper :—

“A true relation of the strange appearance of a man-fish about three miles within the river Thames, having a musket in one hand and a petition in the other, credibly reported by six sailors, who both saw and talked with the monster.”

“A perfect mermaid was, by the last great wind, driven ashore near Greenwich, with her comb in one hand and her looking-glass in the other. She seemed to be of the countenance of a most fair and beautiful woman, with her arms crossed, weeping out many pearly drops of salt tears; and afterwards she, gently turning herself upon her back again, swam away without being seen any more.”

These are wonderful stories ; yet it must not be imagined that the newspaper was made up entirely of such Baron-Munchausenlike writing. Current events were chronicled, and in the main chronicled faithfully ; and perhaps one of the earliest examples of English reporting is to be found in this century—an account of the great London Fire, given in the *London Gazette* in 1666 :—

“On the 2nd inst., at one of the clock in the morning, there happened to break out a sad and deplorable fire in Pudding Lane, near New Fish Street, which falling out at that hour of the night, and in a quarter of the town so close built with wooden pitched houses, spread itself so far before day, and with such distraction to the inhabitants and neighbours, that care was not taken for the timely preventing the further effusion of it by pulling down houses as ought to have been ; so that

this lamentable fire in a short time became too big to be mastered by any engines or working near it. It fell out, most unhappily too, that a violent easterly wind fomented it, and kept it burning all that day, and the night following, spreading itself up to Gracechurch Street, and downwards from Cannon Street to the Water-side, as far as the Three Cranes in the Vintrey. The people, in all parts about it, distracted by the vastness of it, and their particular care to carry away their goods, many attempts were made to prevent the spreading of it by pulling down houses, and making great intervals, but all in vain, the fire seizing upon the timber and rubbish, and so continuing itself, even through those spaces, and raging in a bright flame all Monday and Tuesday, notwithstanding his Majesties own and his Royal Highnesses indefatigable and personal pains to apply all possible means to

prevent it, calling upon and helping the people with their Guards; and a great number of nobility and gentry unweariedly assisting therein, for which they were requited with a thousand blessings from the poor distressed people. By the favour of God the wind slackened a little on Tuesday night, and the flames meeting with brick-buildings at the Temple, by little and little it was observed to lose its force on that side, so that on Wednesday morning we began to hope well, and his Royal Highness, never despairing or slackning his personal care, wrought so well that day, assisted in some parts by the Lords of the Council before and behind it, that a stop was put to it at the Temple Church, near Holburn Bridge, Pie-corner, Aldersgate, Cripplegate, near the lower end of Coleman Street, at the end of Basinghall Street, by the Postern, at the upper end of Bishopsgate Street, and Leadenhall Street,

at the Standard in Cornhill, at the church in Fanchurch Street, near Clothworkers Hall in Mincing Lane, at the middle of Mark Lane, and at the Tower dock."

Not many years after the Great Fire—in 1702—the first daily newspaper, styled the *Daily Courant*, started ; and since that time the history of the English newspaper press has been one of enterprise and progress. The daily newspaper, be it the *Times*, the *Standard*, the *Daily News*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Yorkshire Post*, or the *Leeds Mercury*, that appears on the breakfast-table every morning, is a great contrast to the small and feeble daily journal of nearly two hundred years ago. The *Daily Courant*, only printed on one side, was no larger than a leaf in a quarto encyclopedia ; it contained only a few insignificant news paragraphs, home and foreign, and the frank statement that "the editor

would give no comments of his own, as he assumed that other people had sense enough to make reflections for themselves." What a different paper is the modern daily, with its summary, leading articles, special correspondence flashed nightly over the private wire, reports of speeches in and out of Parliament, intelligence as to how feverishly or steadily the pulse of commerce beats, and general news more or less attractive from every corner of the land and every quarter of the globe ! Yet few of its readers think at what wear and tear of brain and hand the news-sheet is produced. They are generally getting their beauty-sleep at midnight, when the newspaper office is ablaze with light—instinct with vigorous life ; when the editor, with shrewd mind and ready pen, is showing his aptitude at political criticism ; when the sub-editors, in touch by telegraph with all the world, have their desks piled high with copy, from which they

must, with skill and celerity, select the contents of the next issue ; when the harassed foreman over the printers—the autocrat of the night—scowls at every additional scrap of copy, swears it cannot be put in type in time to get to press, and shouts to his men, “Push on with correcting, gentlemen,” “New York prices,” “Section Z Churchill’s speech,” and similar phrases, until the last line is set up, the type is in the formes, rushed to the foundry to be cast, the plates placed on the machines, the papers printed, and taken at no snail’s pace to the stations to catch the newspaper trains. It is sharp work, this daily grasp of the world’s news, and is responsible for many bald heads, wrinkled brows, and crow’s-feet about the eyes ; but it is work that brings some satisfaction and pride in its accomplishment.

It is, after all, on the reporter that the success of the newspaper to a great extent depends. He is the collector of news, for

the circulation of which the paper really exists. He is indispensable. On his verbatim report of the Premier's speech the editor bases his leading article. Were it not for the reporter's industry at home and abroad, and the persistent and sometimes whimsically ungrammatical zeal of the country correspondent, the sub-editor's ruthless occupation would be gone. The reporter is always busy; he is tireless. He records the splendour and dazzle of the Queen's drawing-room, and the want and wretchedness of the poor. No festival is complete without him; and he turns up at every calamity. He listens to the debates in the House and opens his note-book at every public meeting. He chronicles the deeds of the hero and the crimes of the miscreant. He tells how the pulse of commerce beats in every market of the world; science and art are beholden to his pen; and even religion itself has to thank him

for some of its spread. He has become a necessity to newspaper production, and no inconsiderable figure in the national life. Therefore it may be interesting to show what his duties are, how he performs them, and with what experience and adventure his career is linked.



II.

The Reporter in Parliament.



CHAPTER II.

THE REPORTER IN PARLIAMENT.

IN Lord Beaconsfield's novel *Endymion*, one of the characters is made to say, "That odious House of Commons is very wearisome," and doubts whether any constitution can bear it very long. But, however wearisome it may be, and whatever its faults, the House of Commons is a source of pride to many Englishmen. Its legislative errors and enervating verbosity are forgotten in the remembrance that the place is hallowed by memories of great statesmen, echoing still, as it were, with the voices of famous orators of the

past, and associated with some measures that have not been without benefit to the nation. Even out of its prejudice and opposition good has occasionally come ; and, so far as the Press of this country is concerned, it is more powerful to-day because of the persecution to which the House of Commons subjected the reporter in years gone by. He was held in scorn, looked upon as an eaves-dropper, an interloper, a low fellow ; he took notes in secret, apologised in public, and narrowly escaped being flung into the Thames. But still he took notes, and, having once got his foot in the House, he managed to keep it there ; and now the reporter is as much at home in Parliament as the hon. member whose wise or foolish words he so deftly takes down in shorthand.

But how he had to fight before his mission was even tacitly recognised ! what struggling he went through before he was allowed to take his seat quietly in the reporters' gallery !

It is claimed by some historians that Sir Symonds d'Ewes, who furnished an account of the proceedings of the House in Elizabeth's reign, was really the first parliamentary reporter; but among pressmen Edward Cave is generally regarded as the father of English reporting. In the beginning of the eighteenth century intelligence of many kinds was published with the greatest freedom. For instance, in 1731 this marriage notice appeared: "The Rev. Mr. Rogers Staines, of York, twenty-six years of age, to a Lincolnshire lady upwards of eighty years of age, with whom he is to have £8,000, and £300 a year, and a coach and four during life only." But with regard to debates in Parliament the people were not taken into confidence in this ingenuous way. The searching light of political criticism did not mercilessly flash on hon. members as it does now. Their utterances in the House were as jealously guarded as if Cerberus, with his many heads and

serpent's tail, stood savagely growling at the gate ; and in 1729 the legislators, finding that some echo of their speeches had got out among the vulgar throng, passed with much determination a resolution to the effect that it was a violation of the House's privileges to publish reports of its proceedings, and "that in future the offenders be punished with the utmost severity." The threat weighed little with Edward Cave. He had founded the *Gentleman's Magazine* ; he determined to make the reporting of parliamentary debates one of its chief features, and in 1736, according to Sir John Hawkins, he did a bold thing. "Taking with him a friend or two, he found means to procure for them and himself admission into the gallery of the House of Commons, or to some concealed station in the other House, and then they privately took down notes of the several speeches, and the general tendency and substance of the arguments. Thus

furnished, Cave and his associates would adjourn to a neighbouring tavern, and compare and adjust their notes, by means whereof, and the help of their memories, they became enabled to fix at least the substance of what they had lately heard and remarked. The reducing this crude matter into form was the work of a future day and an abler hand—Guthrie, the historian, whom Cave retained for the purpose.” The note-taking was surreptitious ; the transcription in the neighbouring tavern not very dignified ; but this crude attempt at recording the speeches of hon. members was practically the birth of the well-nigh perfect system of parliamentary reporting that may be now seen working any night when the House is sitting.

For two years Cave’s temerity went unquestioned. His reports were talked about in the clubs and the coffee-houses, spoken of with commendation, ridicule, contempt,

as the case might be. Prominent legislators were astounded at the man's effrontery, then they became indignant, and in 1738, after a very heated debate in the House, another resolution was passed, threatening Cave and his ingenious and audacious penmen with all sorts of penalties if they dared to continue this reprehensible practice. But the threat was of no avail. It simply changed the manner of, but did not suppress, Cave's reporting. Hitherto he had given the first and last letter of a speaker's name, such as, "L—d S——y, in criticising the foreign policy of the Government," or "Mr. G——e, in explanation of his Irish proposals ;" but now he had recourse to a fictitious name for Parliament, and turned every speaker's name topsy-turvy. This he did so adroitly that it was easy enough to identify any member's utterances. It was in April that the House waxed wroth about reporters and their impertinence in thrusting themselves into

such a select assembly. In June Cave set the House at defiance. He gave more copious reports of the speeches in Parliament, but he published them in his magazine as "An Appendix to Captain Lemuel Gulliver's Account of the Famous Empire of Lilliput," under the heading, "Debates in the Senate of Great Lilliput." A duke was a Nardac, a lord styled Hurgo, and an ordinary hon. member a Clinab. The disguise was so slight that it did not mystify even the dullest politician; but it saved Cave from fines and penalties, for the House could not proceed against a man for reporting the speeches of statesmen in the imaginary kingdom of Lilliput.

Guthrie was scarcely equal to this new phase of reporting, and on November 19th, 1740, Cave engaged Dr. Johnson to do the work. At that time the Doctor was only thirty years of age, full of energy, with an exhaustless capacity for trenchant writing,

and he took a real delight in putting eloquent words into the mouths of statesmen, whether they had uttered them or not. The people, reading Dr. Johnson's reports of Parliament, wondered at the Demosthenic power so suddenly revealed by our legislators, characterised as the speeches were by "force of argument and splendour of language."

For nearly three years Dr. Johnson continued Cave's reporter, and during the whole of this period parliamentary utterances were widely read. Some of the speeches, as reported, were marvels of scholarly diction, and, when in print, surprised even the members themselves. Reporting was the easiest thing in the world to the Doctor. He did not trouble to go to the House. His custom was "to fix upon a speaker's name, then to make an argument for him, and conjure up an answer;" and he did all this so well that Voltaire, on reading the debates,

exclaimed, "The eloquence of Greece and Rome is revived in the British Senate." One of the most notable speeches credited to the elder Pitt was written by Dr. Johnson in a garret in Exeter Street; and, when asked, at a dinner given by Foote, how it was possible for him to write the speech, he retorted, "Sir, I wrote it in Exeter Street. I never was in the gallery of the House of Commons but once in my life. Cave had interest with the doorkeepers; he and the persons employed under him got admittance, they brought away the subjects of discussion, the names of the speakers, the side they took, and the order in which they rose, together with notes of various arguments adduced in the course of the debate. The whole was afterwards communicated to me, and I composed the speeches in the form they now have in the parliamentary debates."

It was a strange expedient, and would not be tolerated now, especially if the modern

reporter, presuming he manufactured the speeches, had a jot of the bias of Dr. Johnson, who made no scruple in confessing that he "took care the Whig dogs should never have the best of the argument."

Cave, in spite of his ingenuity in giving publicity to the proceedings of the House of Commons, soon got into trouble with regard to speeches in the House of Lords, and in 1747, along with Thomas Astley, the printer of the *London Magazine*, was ordered into the custody of the Usher of the Black Rod. Both men had printed in their magazines reports of the trial of Lord Lovat, who was charged with high treason in the 1745 rebellion. For this offence—this grave breach of privilege—Cave's apology was abject, though it is probable there was a spice of satire in the manner in which he humbly implored their lordships' pardon. Anyhow, he was set free on paying the fees and solemnly

promising never to commit such an offence again.

The next few years was an exciting time for the Press. It numbered among its writers Fielding, Smollett, Johnson, John Wilkes, Lord Temple, Charles Churchill, and the mysterious writer of *The Letters of Junius*. It was a time of very plain speaking, of wit, sarcasm, and strong criticism. Wilkes, however, was the scorpion. In his paper the *North Briton*, his comments on the Bute Administration were so scathing that he overthrew the Ministry; he even went to the extreme of saying that the King, on the opening of Parliament in 1762, did not speak the truth; he was committed to the Tower, expelled from the House of Commons, of which he had been a member, and altogether went through a very stormy time, being punished not only by Parliament, but threatened by aggrieved individuals—such, for instance, as Captain

Forbes, a Scotchman, who, incensed at what Wilkes had written about his country, said to the intrepid journalist, "The first time ever I shall meet you in the streets or elsewhere, I will give you an hundred strokes of a stick, as you deserve to be used no more as a gentleman, but as an eternal rascal and scoundrel."

Meanwhile the reporters were courageously fighting their own battle, giving such reports as they could gather of the proceedings in Parliament, enduring the obloquy of hon. members, taking notes of speeches amid considerable difficulty, and daily expecting the chagrin of the House to focus in some arbitrary action against them. At last the sword of Damocles fell. Lord Marchmont took an almost sardonic pleasure in proceeding against the printer of any paper for breach of privilege. If any nobleman's name was mentioned in the report of a debate, it was in the power of

the Legislature to inflict a fine of £100; and his lordship, who abominated newspapers, found intense enjoyment in pressing for these fines, or in having half a dozen newspaper proprietors apologising in a row on their knees at the bar of the House. And the House of Commons, on February 5th, 1771, became so exasperated at the conduct of the reporters "misrepresenting the speeches and reflecting on several of the members of this House," that it nearly forgot its own dignity. Not only were the printers of the leading newspapers called to the bar, reprimanded, and ordered to pay the fees, but an effort was also made to render liable the "compositors, pressmen, correctors, blackers, and devils." Miller, the printer of the *London Evening Post*, did not surrender, and was ordered to be taken into custody by the sergeant-at-arms. But, to the anger of the House and the amusement of the people outside, the sergeant-

at-arms was thwarted. His messenger arrested Miller, but Miller gave the messenger into custody for assault. The unfortunate officer — though he was the representative of the House of Commons — was taken before Brass Crosby, the Lord Mayor, and committed for assault ! So the House had the intense mortification of seeing their own servant treated with ignominy, and the printer who had defied them set free ! The Lord Mayor, attending in his place in Parliament, pointed out that, according to the charter granted to the City of London by Edward III. in the first year of his reign, the citizens were exempted from any law process being served upon them except by their own officers ; but the House was determined to have satisfaction for the insult it had received in the City.

The debate was an angry one, carried on with a mob at the doors of West-

minster; the House was adjourned for two days, when another fierce war of words took place; then the chief magistrate was committed to the Tower, as well as Alderman Oliver, who upheld his ruling; but on the prorogation of Parliament, and when the House had no longer the power to keep them captive, they stepped triumphantly out of the Tower, amid much rejoicing.

This strange and exciting conflict between Parliament and the City authorities nearly annihilated further opposition to the reporting of debates. The people were thoroughly roused; they claimed as a right that they should know what their representatives were saying; it was idle for members to fuss and fume and to heap opprobrium on the stenographer. As Andrews says, in his *History of British Journalism*, "The Press was now, for the first time, the acknowledged representative of the people. There it stood overlooking, perhaps

sometimes overawing, those who had known and cared nothing for their constituents after they left the hustings; a jealous guardian, a watchful sentinel, a sleepless Argus; behind the Speaker's chair there had sprung up a power greater than the Speaker, for there in the gallery was the eye of Europe; the House of Commons had been unroofed, and the world was looking in."



III.

Incidents and Traditions of “The Gallery.”



CHAPTER III.

INCIDENTS AND TRADITIONS OF "THE GALLERY."



ABOUT the time Oliver Goldsmith was surprising the readers of the *Public Ledger* with his delightful letters from a "Citizen of the World," William Woodfall, the first editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, was astounding everybody by his wonderful memory. It was in 1769 that the *Morning Chronicle* was issued. Then newspaper enterprise was in its infancy. The great staffs now absolutely necessary on daily papers were undreamt of. "Memory Woodfall," as he was familiarly

called, on account of his marvellous power of recollection, had neither assistant editors, sub-editors, nor reporters to help him ; he was editor, reporter, and printer of the *Morning Chronicle*. His editorial duties were not arduous, for until 1781 no leading article whatever appeared in the paper ; but he was a giant, a prince among reporters, possessing not only extraordinary ability, but a wondrous capacity for physical endurance, that must be the envy of many a modern reporter.

It is a popular but absurd notion, that reporting takes something of the character of a perpetual holiday, that there is more amusement than hard labour in it ; whereas of all professions it is perhaps the most exhausting, the profession of all others in which a strong physique and determined will are necessary to success. The equitable division of labour on the best reporting staffs has been obtained to a nicety ; still

there are occasions when not only the mental qualities of a Metternich, but the strength of Hercules, are expected in the reporter; and many a night he goes home worn out by anxiety, and almost prostrate with the utter weariness and enfeeblement that comes as nature's protest to ceaseless note-taking and prolonged manufacture of copy for the printers.

But "Memory Woodfall" was called upon by the nature of his duties and his limited staff to do more than many a modern reporter, and he became a notable figure in "the gallery" of the House of Commons, quite as much through his physical endurance and his working tenacity as for his splendid memory. There are now many gifted men in "the gallery"—men with considerable capacity for work, men of great professional skill, and high intellectual attainments; but the bulk of their work is less than

Woodfall's, and they do it under pleasanter conditions. Even when Parliament was snarling at the audacity of the Press, Woodfall managed to get into the House. With a sandwich or a hard-boiled egg in his pocket, he would sit out the longest debate, listen attentively to everything that was said, but never take a note; then, when the members, longing for change, went to bed, to ball, or to party, he would go to the office, and, with nearly every word uttered in the debate treasured in his retentive brain, would write entirely from memory fifteen or sixteen speeches. Woodfall's experiences of Parliament certainly resulted in more all-night sittings than those of any member of the House during recent days, or rather nights, of obstruction.

Not so assiduous, perhaps, as Woodfall, but more ingenious, was William Radcliffe, the novelist's husband. He was an Ox-

ford man, a law student, an attaché; but for him reporting had a fascination that he could not overcome. He cared less for diplomatic fame than the incessant whirl and variety of a reporter's life; true, he became a newspaper proprietor, but he was his own reporter, and possessed such a faculty for mental concentration, that he could, as it were, divide his mind into two parts, and dictate to his compositors from memory, and without notes, two distinct articles at the same time dealing with debates in the House—for instance, "while a sentence in one article was being set up, he had resumed the other, and was dictating it without hesitation or confusion."

This dual exercise of the mind is common now with many experienced reporters. They are able to write out in longhand what the speaker has said, and at the same time to listen attentively to what

the speaker is saying ; otherwise they would, in the case of a night meeting, never get their work done in time. They have solved the problem that it is possible to do two things at once, and, as a rule, they do them admirably ; but Radcliffe, by his versatile process of dictation in the middle of the eighteenth century, when newspaper training was a very haphazard affair, was justly considered a phenomenal reporter.

To James Perry is due the credit of revolutionising reporting in the last century. Leigh Hunt describes him as "a lively, good-natured man, with a shrewd expression of countenance, and twinkling eyes, which he not unwillingly turned upon the ladies ;" but, whatever his devotion to the fair sex, he was a talented, industrious journalist. Scarcely any one had a more romantic youth. From his home in Aberdeen he went to college, and was afterwards articled to an

attorney; but his father got into financial embarrassment, and James Perry had to seek such fortune as he could find. When thrown upon the world, he showed more agility with his legs than activity with his brain. As a strolling player he once appeared in the character of "Sempronius," but it was not so much in his power as an actor as in the perfection of his dancing that he was of value to the company—he was chiefly relied upon for a hornpipe between the acts! His experience of the drama had not much of the glamour of fame about it, and he tried a clerkship in Manchester; but the endless reckoning-up of figures, the monotony of commercial life, wearied him. He broke away desperately from office routine and went to London, where, after some struggling, he achieved success. Nichols, in his *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, says: "Mr. Perry's efforts to obtain a situation were unavailing.

But while waiting in London for some situation presenting itself, he amused himself in writing fugitive verses and short essays, which he put into the letter-box of the *General Advertiser*, as the casual contributions of an anonymous correspondent; and they were of such merit as to procure immediate insertion. It happened that a firm to whom he had a letter of introduction, namely Messrs. Richardson and Urquhart, were part proprietors of the *Advertiser*, and on these gentlemen Mr. Perry was in the habit of calling daily to inquire if any situation had yet offered for him. On entering their shop one day to make the usual inquiry, Mr. Perry found Urquhart engaged in reading an article in the *Advertiser*, and evidently with great satisfaction. When he had finished, the former put the now almost hopeless question whether any situation had yet presented itself, and it was answered in the negative.

"But," added Mr. Urquhart, "if you could write such articles as these," pointing to that he had just been reading, "you would find immediate employment." Mr. Perry glanced at the article, discovered that it was one of his own, and convinced his friend, Mr. Urquhart, "by showing another article in manuscript, which he had intended to put into the box as usual before returning home." Perry, after this proof of his literary ability, was placed on the staff of the *Advertiser*, with the understanding that he should have extra pay for any help he might give to the *London Evening Post*. It was a rare opportunity, and he valued it at its true worth. Not only did he excel in original writing, but he revealed great talent as a reporter—enduring talent; for during the trial of Admiral Keppel and Admiral Palliser, extending over six weeks, "he sent up daily from Portsmouth eight columns of the reports, taken by himself alone, which

increased the circulation of the paper by several thousands daily." The man was a born journalist; and his talents were so speedily recognised, that he was offered, and accepted, the editorship of the *Gazetteer*. The salary was only four guineas a week, not a particularly exorbitant sum, when it is remembered that an editor's salary nowadays sometimes goes into four figures; but it enabled Perry to live comfortably until he made a greater name and a better position on the Press.

Like all editors worthy the name, he kept his eyes open, and he saw that the crude system of reporting then prevailing was capable of much improvement. "Memory Woodfall" was as indefatigable as ever, laboriously writing out long debates through the night for publication on the following day; but Perry said to himself, "Why should not the reports of these debates be published the next morning?" And

he answered the question himself. He organised a corps of reporters for his paper. He got them into the House. They reported hand over hand, as it were—one reporter taking one speech, another reporter taking another, and so on throughout the debate; so that often when the House rose the speeches made there were almost in type in the office of the *Gazetteer*, and the paper appeared the next morning containing a tolerably full report of the previous night's proceedings in Parliament. "Memory Woodfall," whose report was not finished until hours afterwards, was by no means pleased with this new phase of reporting that entirely forestalled his own labours; but newspaper readers were delighted, there was a daily increasing demand for the *Gazetteer*, and the new system of reporting, conceived and carried out by Perry, was generally adopted. This system he improved and perfected during his

connection with the *Morning Chronicle*, of which he became part purchaser and editor. The story as to where the money came from to purchase the paper is told by Mr. Charles Pebody, in his book *English Journalism, and the Men Who Have Made It*. "Old Bellamy, the house-keeper of St. Stephen's," he says, "found the money for the purchase of the *Morning Chronicle*, and it was through his friendship that Perry was able to pass his reporters in and out of the gallery when the reporters of every other paper found the doors closed against them. Bellamy made a fortune by the way in which, when the House continued its sittings after the dinner-hour, he put a chop or a steak on the gridiron for hungry M.P.'s, and served it upon a small table in the corner of the kitchen with a glass of port or sherry from the wood ; and the story runs that Perry and his partner—Mr. Gray—in taking the *Morning Chronicle*, were

obliged to take with it so much of Bellamy's old port, that from the time of the purchase in 1792 till the date of Perry's death in 1821, the anniversary of the purchase never returned without finding enough of the original stock in the cellar to drink to the memory of Bellamy and his advance."

Whether it was the quality of his port, or his genial disposition, or the liberality of his remuneration, Perry managed to gather round him many distinguished writers—men like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Porson, Mackintosh, Hazlitt, and John Campbell, who, by-the-bye, though he became Lord High Chancellor, was a curious dramatic critic, one of his notices in the *Morning Chronicle* beginning, "Last night a play called *Romeo and Juliet* was performed at Drury Lane. The play is a good one so far as it went, and was performed in a very creditable manner. But it is too long for these days; and we would recommend

the author, before he puts it again on the stage, to cut it down"!¹ This singular ignorance of Shakespeare, however, is perhaps more to be excused than that shown only a few years ago by a dramatic critic in the provinces. He went to see the play of *Hamlet*, and, writing about it in the newspaper of which he was the representative, apologised for not giving the plot, owing to want of space, and expressed his surprise that the piece contained many colloquialisms with which people were already familiar!

Perry undoubtedly owed much of his success to his staff of brilliant writers; but he was too shrewd a man to neglect the mainstay of the paper, the reporting department, and he had in his service many skilful reporters—"men who wrote shorthand." Of these one of the most

¹ Andrews, *History of British Journalism*.

famous was John Black, who walked from Edinburgh to London, arrived at Charing Cross with only threepence in his pocket, was such a fierce person that he fought two duels, and was constantly at war with himself in his efforts to overcome "the boorishness of bearing" with which he was cursed; yet he made his name in the reporters' gallery, and finally succeeded Perry as editor of the *Morning Chronicle*.

Notwithstanding Mr. Black's exciting career, he was not so Bohemian in his habits as some of the reporters who about this time sought their livelihood in "the gallery." The history of reporting at the close of the eighteenth century is a romance—a story of starvation and revelry, of pathos and recklessness, of despair and constant endeavour. There is no sadder anecdote in the English language than that of the life of Robert Heron. From 1793 to 1799 the weaver's son, with his college education,

and his amazing extravagance, was in prison for debt. There he wrote his *History of Scotland* "for the benefit of his creditors," and then made his way to London, where he was engaged as parliamentary reporter on the *Oracle*, and afterwards filled similar positions on the *Porcupine* and the *Morning Post*. Often "he had not a shilling in his pocket or a shirt to his back;" if he got a sovereign by work or from a generous friend, he was restless until he had spent it; he had good chances, but neglected them all. Appointed editor of the *British Press*, he held the appointment for a couple of weeks; his editorship of *Lloyd's Evening Post* lasted only a few months; his connection with the *British Neptune* he severed for a whim; and he came to hopeless grief with *Fame*, his own paper, strangely named, considering that it was an utter failure, and that its proprietor, according to D'Israeli's *Calamities of Authors*, dragged out a long

imprisonment in Newgate, and died a wretched death in the Fever Hospital in Gray's Inn Lane, penniless and forsaken.

A much more rollicking, and certainly less miserable, member of the Press was Mark Supple. Mr. Andrews, in his *British Journalism*, describes him as "the big-boned Irish reporter on the staff of Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*," and gives the following amusing account of one of his freaks: "Supple's fame now rests on the anecdote told of him by Peter Finnerty (a fellow-reporter who survived him only four years) of an after-dinner feat—he had dined at Bellamy's, as was his wont—when, taking advantage of a pause in the debate, he roared out from the gallery for 'a song from Mr. Speaker!' The Speaker, the precise Addington, was paralysed; the House was thunderstruck—there was clearly no precedent for such a proceeding as this; in

the next minute the comic prevailed over the serious, and the House was in a roar of laughter, led off by Pitt. However, for appearance' sake, the sergeant-at-arms was obliged to seek out the offender, but no one in the gallery would betray Mark Supple, and the official was about retiring at fault, when Supple indicated to him by a meaning nod that a fat Quaker who sat near him was the delinquent. The poor Quaker was taken into custody accordingly; but in the midst of a scene of confusion and excitement the real offender was discovered, and, after a few hours' durance, was allowed to go off on making an apology."

Peter Finnerty, the reporter mentioned in the above anecdote, was as fond of practical jokes as Theodore Hook. He did not, like some reporters, become overwhelmed with the importance and responsibility of his calling; he neither worried himself haggard, nor fidgeted his hair grey.

Life to him was a comedy, a mirth-provoker, and he cared little whether the laugh was for or against him, so that the laugh was there. Some of his jokes, however, were beyond a joke ; indeed, were Finnerty alive now, and succeeded in hoodwinking a colleague as he did Morgan O'Sullivan, he would run the risk of a thrashing. Morgan in the gallery one day felt so drowsy during a dull debate that he could scarcely keep his eyes open. Obtaining Finnerty's promise to supply him with any speeches made, Morgan was soon asleep, and awoke in about an hour greatly refreshed and eager for work. But he had to pay dearly for his slumber. Finnerty gravely informed him that during his nap there had been an important speech delivered by Mr. Wilberforce, a member of the House, on the virtues of the Irish potato. Morgan, never pausing to think that the subject had a suggestion of the ludicrous, would not be

pacified until the speech had been dictated to him by Finnerty.

The speech, entirely Finnerty's concoction, made Mr. Wilberforce say: "Had it been my lot to be born and reared in Ireland, where my food would have principally consisted of the potato—the most nutritious and salubrious root—instead of being the poor infirm, stunted creature you, Sir, and honourable gentlemen now behold me, I should have been a tall, stout, athletic man, and able to carry an enormous weight. I hold that root to be invaluable; and the man who first cultivated it in Ireland I regard as a benefactor of the first magnitude to his country." Morgan was so overjoyed at this legislative tribute to the excellence of his national potato, that he willingly dictated the speech to several other reporters, and every newspaper of note—except the *Morning Chronicle*, in the office of which Finnerty sat chuckling—had this

extraordinary report of Mr. Wilberforce's strange speech in the House on the extraordinary virtues of the Irish potato.

The speech was read with amazement. At the clubs and in the City everybody was laughing at Mr. Wilberforce's speech—except Mr. Wilberforce. He thought it rather a cause for rage than merriment, especially as his friends gazed pityingly at him, thinking he had gone demented. But his anger cooled; and when the House met at night he said: "Every honourable member has doubtless read the speech which I am represented as having made on the previous night. [The hon. member read the speech amid roars of laughter.] I can assure hon. members," he continued, "that no one could have read this speech with more surprise than I myself did this morning when I found the papers on my breakfast-table. For myself, personally, I care but little about it,

though, if I were capable of uttering such nonsense as is here put into my mouth, it is high time that, instead of being a member of this House, I were an inmate of some lunatic asylum. It is for the dignity of this House that I feel concerned ; for if hon. members were capable of listening to such nonsense, supposing me capable of giving expression to it, it were much more appropriate to call this a theatre for the performance of farces than a place for the legislative deliberations of the representatives of the nation."

Finnerty, on this occasion, had not to pay any penalty for his "exquisite gift of humour;" but later, for a libel on Lord Castlereagh, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he was imprisoned in Lincoln Gaol for eighteen months. His exasperation at this incarceration knew no bounds. He felt like a strong-winged eagle in a cage, and became so fierce that his friends were

almost afraid to converse with him. Certainly he did not mince words when speaking to Lord Castlereagh. Grant, in his *Newspaper Press*, says : "Soon after Peter's release from jail he chanced to meet Lord Castlereagh in the streets ; and the latter went up to him, and, in the bluntest manner imaginable, inquired how he was. 'Well enough,' was Peter's bluff answer, 'to hope to live to see the day when you will cut your throat.' Nearly ten years after this, strange to say, Lord Castlereagh did cut his throat ; and Peter Finnerty lived to see that day."

The reporters of the nineteenth century are still rather a Bohemian race. The Knights of the Pencil, as they are sometimes called, are attracted to the Press from every class of society, and they include some strange though gifted beings ; but it would be difficult to beat, for variety of characteristics, the hetero-

geneous group of reporters who flourished in the old gallery of the House—men of original ideas, great attainments, convivial dispositions, erratic manners and customs—men like John Payne Collier, the clever expounder of Shakespeare's text; O'Dwyer, the classical scholar, whose sense of the ludicrous so overbalanced his learning, that he reported the speech of Richard Martin, the member for Galway, *in italics*; William Jerdan, who had little consideration for other people's foibles, and described his own editor at work as follows: "Our editor was originally intended for the Kirk, and was a well-informed person; but to see him at or after midnight in his official chair a-writing his leader was a trial for a philosopher. With the slips of paper before him, a pot of porter close at hand, and a pipe of tobacco in his mouth or casually laid down, he proceeded *secundum artem*. The

head hung, with the chin on the collar-bone, as in deep thought—a whiff—another—a tug at the beer—and a line and a half or two lines committed to the blotted paper. By this process, repeated with singular regularity, he would contrive between the hours of twelve and three to produce as decent a column as the ignorant public required."

One of the most eccentric of this group of reporters was Proby, on the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*. Like "Memory Woodfall," he never condescended to note-taking, and reported entirely from memory. It was his boast that he had never been out of London; he wore a bag-wig after they had been discarded by everybody else; he "was the last man in London to walk with a cane as long as himself;" he was nicknamed "King Porus," because he was always perspiring; "his appetite for pastry was inordinate, and he once or

twice ruined himself by it, and had to be bailed out of prison for a pastry-cook's bill;" but with all his vagaries he had a horror of procrastination, and was never a minute late in his place in the gallery.

IV.

Reporting To-Day in the House.



CHAPTER IV.

REPORTING TO-DAY IN THE HOUSE.

THE old House of Commons was destroyed by fire in 1834, and with the erection of the new House sprang up a new race of reporters. Parliament had not entirely lost its hostility to pressmen; there had been several attempts to eject them from the old gallery; but the voice of the nation was stronger than the voice and prejudice of its representatives, and Lord Macaulay spoke the sentiments of the country when he said: "If the Commons were to suffer

the Lords to amend money-bills, we do not believe that the people would care one straw about the matter. If they were to suffer the Lords even to originate money-bills, we doubt whether such a surrender of their constitutional rights would excite half so much dissatisfaction as the exclusion of strangers from a single important discussion. The gallery in which the reporters sit has become a fourth estate of the realm. The publication of the debates, a practice which seemed to the most liberal statesmen of the old school full of danger to the great safeguards of public liberty, is now regarded by many persons as a safeguard tantamount, and more than tantamount, to all the rest together."

Conversion came slowly to the House, as it does to most hardened sinners. Perry, the literary Ajax, made it uncomfortable when he defiantly exclaimed,

"The *Morning Chronicle* stands now, as it did in 1793, in the front of the battle, not only for itself, but for the liberty of the Press of England." Sir Joseph Yorke's motion for the expulsion of the reporters, and Windham's attack upon the gentlemen of the Press in the gallery, among whom he said "were to be found men of all descriptions—bankrupts, lottery office keepers, footmen, and decayed tradesmen," aroused indignation outside and encouraged penitence in the House; and that conversion was almost completed by Sheridan's brilliant championship of the Press and his scornful refutation of Windham's fictions, proving as he did, that, instead of being the offscouring of the City, nearly all the gentlemen—some twenty-four in number—then reporting the parliamentary debates for the newspapers were University men, and that many had gained literary distinction.

Windham's was the last important outburst against the admission of reporters to the House, and, though it was practically futile, it nearly wrought them irreparable injury in another quarter—at Lincoln's Inn. The benchers, presumably anxious not to lower the status of the Inn, adopted a resolution "that no man who had ever written for a newspaper for hire should be allowed to perform his preparatory exercises, in order to his admission to the Bar." The motion was unjust and ridiculous ; it was petitioned against in the House, and James Stephen, then Member of Parliament and Master in Chancery, remembering that he had been a reporter on the *Morning Post*, supported Sheridan's defence of the Press in a speech conspicuous for its eloquence—a speech in which he sketched the difficulties and privations that many law students had to encounter, and in which he discomfited the benchers by showing how often reporting in

Parliament had been a means to many an impecunious barrister's success. No more was heard of the absurd resolution ; and it certainly seems strange that it should have been proposed at all, for to-day the Bar and the Press have quite a twin relationship. A number of the men in the reporters' gallery have "eaten their dinners," as it were, on the threshold of the Bar, and studied the mysteries of law, and the Temple is the home now of many who owe their prosperity as much to their shorthand dexterity, and the experience it gave them, as to the pages of Blackstone and the procedure of courts.

With the breakdown of Windham's opposition, and the ignominious retreat of the benchers, the position of the reporter in Parliament greatly improved. He had repelled a fierce attack. Like a skilful general, he entrenched himself behind the invulnerable barricade of public opinion, and eventually felt strong enough to make re-

prisals. This he did with a vengeance in 1833. Owing to the difficulty of hearing in the old gallery—where the reporters had to sit on a back seat, and catch the words of the members through a buzz of conversation from strangers sitting on the five or six rows of benches before them—frequent complaints were made of the inaccuracy of the reports. The House—or, at least, many members of it—had still a lingering antipathy to the Press, and O'Connell, constituting himself the mouthpiece of the reporter-detesters, sought to clear the gallery of the obnoxious gentlemen. On July 25th he expressed his intention of waging war against the journal proprietary of London until he defeated them, and said he should move, day by day, for their appearance at the bar of the House for breach of privilege. Nor did he content himself with merely throwing down the gauntlet, but he endeavoured to stiletto the reporters in the back

by charging them with suppressing his speeches from malicious motives. Indignation surged through the gallery at this deliberate insult. The reporters signed a round-robin — published in the *Times* — which made O'Connell's Irish blood dance in his veins. It said: "Without any wish to prejudice the interests of the establishments with which many of us have been long connected, and to which all of us are sincerely attached, we have deliberately resolved not to report any speech of Mr. O'Connell until he shall have retracted, as publicly as he made, the calumnious assertion that our reports are designedly false."

The exasperation of O'Connell was unbounded. He moved that the representatives of the two most prominent newspapers should be brought to the bar of the House, because they had not reported one of his speeches fully. The resolution was very properly rejected. He used every oratorical

art—he passionately declaimed, he spoke plaintively with his musical voice against those naughty reporters—but it was all in vain. They would not—they did not report his speeches. Then he had recourse to the old standing order, and, addressing the Speaker, said, “I think, Sir, I see strangers in the gallery.” Strangers, according to the usage of Parliament, had to withdraw, and the reporters went out gladly. For days O’Connell continued this farcical comedy, for days he went unreported; but at length his heroics died away to pleading, and as “several of the most influential members of the House appealed to them not to carry the matter further,” the reporters ultimately resumed their duties as cheerfully as if they had never been ruffled by the O’Connell episode.

The reporter is often called the servant of the public; and now and then some citizen who has scrambled into brief

authority thinks he has a sort of prescriptive right in him—that he may order him about, tell him, not always in the most courteous language, what to chronicle and what to waive; but it is satisfactory to know that the reporter of to-day has a mind and will of his own, and that, while his devotion to duty is increasing almost to the verge of self-sacrifice, he is quite as fearless as the pressmen who braved O'Connell's wrath.

Of the men who entered the reporters' gallery of the new House of Commons, the most distinguished was Charles Dickens. The novelty of William Woodfall's memory feats had worn off. Several of the long-hand reporters who had been familiar figures in the old gallery were dead; and the new set of reporters gradually taking the places vacated by the older hands depended more upon shorthand than memory. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens gives an interesting

glimpse at his shorthand proficiency. He says: "I have tamed that savage stenographic mystery. I make a respectable income by it. I am in high repute for my accomplishment in all pertaining to the art, and am joined with eleven others in reporting the debates in Parliament for a morning paper. Night after night I record predictions that never come to pass, professions that are never fulfilled, explanations that are only meant to mystify. I wallow in words." Dickens, it is evident, thought that Parliament, like Gratiano, spoke "an infinite deal of nothing," and was overjoyed "when he noted down the music of the parliamentary bagpipes for the last time." But he never regretted that he had to wallow in words there, and his experience in the reporters' gallery was of infinite value to him when he entered upon the more ambitious literary path that led him to fame. The author of *Pickwick*

won his spurs as a reporter on the *Mirror of Parliament*; but it was in 1835 that he went into the reporters' gallery on the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*, the paper so inseparably linked with his earlier career. At this time the reporters in Parliament had come upon more halcyon days—or rather nights. They had no longer to take a back seat; they were provided in the new House with a gallery for their use exclusively, and did their work under more comfortable conditions. Their position in that House is becoming stronger year by year. The standing order by which Parliament has power to enforce the withdrawal of strangers is still a standing menace to the reporters, but it is only worthy of mention as a legislative and literary curiosity. In *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, it is referred to as follows:—

NEWSPAPER REPORTERS.

“It is contrary to the standing orders of both Houses that any stranger should be present, and an individual member can demand that the order be enforced; the publication of debates is held to be theoretically a breach of privilege; but in modern times, if any member were repeatedly to insist upon the exclusion of ‘strangers,’ as all are called who neither are members nor officers of the House, there can be no doubt that this abuse of the privilege would lead to such a modification of the standing order as would deprive individual members of any control over a matter so interesting to the nation, whose representatives and servants they are, from whose pleasure their parliamentary existence and authority are derived, and by whom that authority would doubtless be speedily withdrawn, were any attempt made

to carry on the business of the public without publicity. Secret deliberations have been so long renounced, that the right of the public to be present through their agents, the reporters, is as clearly established now as if no theoretical privacy had ever existed. Occasions have arisen, however, though at long intervals, when the House has thought proper to exclude the public, as in 1870, when it was excluded during debates not thought desirable to render public. Up to the year 1871 this could be effected by a single member, but in April of that year a Select Committee came to the decision that strangers should not be excluded except after a vote carried without amendment or debate. In 1875 to this was added a resolution by which the Speaker or Chairman, as the case may be, was empowered to order the withdrawal of strangers from any part of the House. But such an order does not

oblige ladies to withdraw from their gallery, which is not supposed to be within the House."

The Speaker, though empowered to order the withdrawal of strangers from the House, is very chary in exercising his prerogative. There is, however, in Mr. Lucy's book, *A Diary of Two Parliaments*, an account of how he took this course on the initiative of Mr. Biggar, on April 27th, 1875:—

"The afternoon questions over, the Speaker was about to call on the first motion, that of Chaplin, with respect to horses, when Biggar, who had made several attempts to catch the right hon. gentleman's eye, finally succeeded, and created a profound sensation by observing that he 'believed there were strangers in the House.' This action, utterly unpre-saged by notice, and absolutely unexpected,

was received in dismayed silence. After a few minutes' pause the Speaker rose and said, 'Do I understand that the hon. member for Cavan persists in his intention of noticing strangers?' 'If you please, Mr. Speaker,' replied Mr. Biggar; and the House, recovering its voice, broke forth in a loud and prolonged groan, amid which the sound, perhaps unprecedented in the House of Commons, of hissing was heard from some members below the gangway on the Ministerial side. 'In that case,' rejoined the Speaker, 'I have no option but to order that strangers should withdraw.' The galleries over the clock happened to be specially crowded. In the Peers' Gallery were the Prince of Wales, the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord Lucan, Lord Grey de Wilton, and other peers, attracted by the debate on Chaplin's motion. The German Ambassador occupied a seat over the clock. The

Prince, the peers, and the ambassador, of course, came under the common term of "strangers," and met the common fate. The only persons other than members allowed to remain in the House were the ladies in the cage over the Press Gallery."

Disraeli, who was then Premier, indignantly condemned Mr. Biggar's caprice, held that the course he had taken was discreditable, and moved the suspension of the order requiring the withdrawal of strangers. The motion was seconded by Lord Hartington, and carried.

"The Speaker ordered the doors to be thrown open, and the members of the Press and other 'strangers' returned, among the first to enter being the Prince of Wales, who had surveyed the scene from the doorway under the gallery. . . . Chaplin at once proceeded with his motion. . . . At the outset he observed that a

more uncalled-for, a more unwarranted, a more offensive mode of interrupting business than that from which they had just suffered he did not remember. 'The hon. member for Cavan,' he added, amid cheers, 'appears to forget that he is now admitted to the society of gentlemen'—a rebuke at which Mr. Biggar audibly chuckled."

Though it is still possible to exclude reporters from the House, it must be confessed that the standing order has no terrors for "the gallery" men. It is possible that, at some crisis in the nation's history, they might yet be asked to withdraw. But they are no longer bundled out at a member's whim. The old ignorant opposition to the Press in Parliament is dead. The reporters have no need to get into the House by stealth to take fugitive notes; they have no need to cloak anybody's speech under the flimsy disguise of "The

Debates in Lilliput." Parliament and people alike recognise the valuable work done in the reporters' gallery—a gallery that has become a necessity to the political and legislative life of the country.

The expansion of the parliamentary reporting has been enormous since Cave first crept into the House. "The gallery" behind the Speaker's chair is now crowded with pressmen whenever there is a debate worth listening to, and the staffs of the newspapers—as given on the opposite page—have seats in it.

The *Times*' chief has the place of honour in the centre of the gallery, and the representatives of other newspapers have seats right and left in the order indicated. There are about two hundred and fifty tickets issued by the sergeant-at-arms to leader writers, correspondents, summary writers, and reporters; and no one is permitted to enter the reporters' gallery

THE REPORTERS' GALLERY.

THE SPEAKER'S
CHAIR.

[illegible]

without a ticket. With the exception of those issued to leader writers, all the tickets are non-transferable; but they also admit to the gallery of the House of Lords, though from time to time the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod issues special tickets—on the rare nights, for instance, when the House of Peers awakes from its dignified repose, and debates some great question with an eloquence that surprises the lower House and the country.

Each London morning paper, each news agency, each combination of provincial journals, and Hansard¹ has its own staff

¹ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, the official record of the proceedings in Parliament, was not originally the work of a special staff of reporters. They took their name from Luke Hansard, who was born in Norwich in 1752, brought up as a printer, went to London with the traditional guinea in his pocket, was employed by Hughes, the printer to the House of Commons, succeeded to the business, and became widely known for his despatch

of parliamentary reporters. A "gallery corps" consists of from three to sixteen gentlemen of the Press—all expert shorthand writers, who can not only take notes, but transcribe them. Each London newspaper has also a summary writer, who likewise manages its corps. Mr. Leycester does this duty for the *Times*;

and accuracy in printing parliamentary papers and debates. He died in 1828, but the business was continued by his family. The reports of the speeches were taken from the morning papers, altered and amplified very often according to the member's whim, and have grown into a mighty record of forgotten talk, or, as one writer has admirably put it, "an embarrassing monument of the vanity of our senators." Recently this reporting work has been undertaken by a company that retains, however, the old name. A London correspondent, commenting on its task, wrote in 1889: "This year's *Hansard* will be considerably bulkier than usual, owing to the greater length at which speeches have been reported. During the session there were 122 sittings, lasting in all for 1,043 hours, the longest sitting being that of the 27th and 28th of August, when the House met

Mr. Geddes for the *Standard* ; Mr. Lucy, the *Daily News* ; Mr. Albery, the *Daily Telegraph* ; Mr. Peacock, the *Morning Post* ; Mr. Fisher, the *Daily Chronicle* ; and Mr. G. M. Bussy, the *Hansard Debates*.

The work of reporting is methodical, sometimes monotonous, but it is never unpleasant, seldom slavish. Take an ordinary night in the House, with a staff of six reporters to cope with the speaking.

at three o'clock and sat for over thirteen hours. *Hansard* shows that 1,625 speeches were made by members of the Government and 965 by ex-Ministers, that the Speaker spoke 497 times, and Mr. Courtney, in the capacity of Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees, 280 times. In addition to these, there were 5,187 speeches by private members, making a total of 8,545 speeches. Mr. W. H. Smith appeared before the House as a speech-maker 199 times, as against Mr. Gladstone's 42 times. Irish matters did their share towards keeping up the figures, for Mr. A. J. Balfour caught the Speaker's eye 110 times, Mr Sexton 145 times, and Mr. Healy 129 times."

Reporting To-Day in the House. 99

A list is made out at the commencement of the sitting something after this fashion:—

GENTLEMEN OF THE STAFF.

| Copy letter. | Time. |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Section A. Mr. Massey . . | 3.0 o'clock. ¹ |
| „ B. Mr. Boyd . . | 3.30 „ |
| „ C. Mr. Micklethwaite. | 4.0 „ |
| „ D. Mr. Goldston. . | 4.30 „ |
| „ E. Mr. Maxwell . . | 5.0 „ |
| „ F. Mr. Grant . . | 5.30 „ |

Instructions.

Gladstone, 1st person, fully.

Churchill, 1st person, cut down.

Harcourt, 3rd person, good summary.

Remainder of debate must be kept to lines.

Mr. Massey, according to this reporters' time-table, occupies his seat in the gallery half an hour, during which his book may become well filled with shorthand notes, or he may find the speakers say little that needs reporting. Whether he gets

¹ The House now meets at three o'clock.

much on his book or not, he has two hours and a half in which to transcribe his notes, to write them out in longhand for the newspaper he represents, inasmuch as Mr. Boyd, Mr. Micklethwaite, Mr. Goldston, Mr. Maxwell, and Mr. Grant each have a turn of half an hour's duration, and it is six o'clock before Mr. Massey is required to re-enter the gallery to take up the next turn. If Mr. Massey's first half-hour's duty has yielded nothing important, and he has only a few lines to write, he may go into the smoke-room, and get a soothing whiff from his well-seasoned pipe; or into the tea-room, where there is food not only for the body, but the mind—newspapers, magazines, and a library of about three hundred volumes; or into the dining-room, where it is possible to obtain a good dinner and pleasant chat.

But if Mr. Gladstone gets up, or Lord Randolph Churchill rises, during Mr.

Massey's take, his pencil has to speed across his note-book ; page after page of grammalogues and phraseograms are dotted down. There is no opportunity for smoke-room gossip. The reporter must hurry to one or other of the writing-out rooms, work incessantly until he has put Mr. Gladstone's or his lordship's utterances into longhand ; and then it may be time for him to go into the gallery again.

So the modern system of reporting goes on throughout the night, quietly, efficiently, mingling method with skill and culture, each gentleman of the staff not only transcribing his notes with rapidity and accuracy, and saving many a member's reputation for sanity, but being careful to see that his copy is properly lettered and folioed, that section follows section in alphabetical order, —that, in fact, the speech, though reported perhaps by six men, reads as smoothly as though it had been done by one.

On a big night in the House, however, such a small staff is inadequate. Take, for instance, the memorable night—April 8th, 1886—when Mr. Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill for Ireland. He was on his legs three hours and twenty-five minutes, and his speech made between ten and twelve columns. It was a night filled with portent to the nation. The country thrilled with excitement. The House was crowded. Nearly all that was distinguished in English political and social life was there. It was a busy night in the reporters' gallery. "Our own correspondent" vividly described the scene in many a newspaper—how the floor of the House was crammed with members; how the peers were packed in their gallery; how the ambassadors, though politeness itself, could not in the crush refrain from treading on the toes of strangers; and what bright eyes shone through the grating of the ladies' gallery!

But the special correspondent, who noticed every little point--that Mr. Gladstone was dressed with unusual care, and wore "a faint yellowish pink flower in his button-hole;" or that Lord Hartington sat with his arms folded, and his tall hat tipped on the end of his nose—had an easy time compared to the reporters. Nearly every daily paper had sent out the instruction, "Gladstone, first person, verbatim." Twelve, sixteen, even twenty reporters formed the corps of some newspapers; and the half-hour "turns" were suspended for three, five, or ten minute takes, the reporters deftly working hand over hand, section by section; so that when Mr. Gladstone resumed his seat at eight o'clock in the evening, having spoken since thirty-five minutes past four o'clock in the afternoon, nearly the whole of his speech, sent either by telephone or messenger, was in the offices of the London morning papers,

and also on the wires for the country. It was an anxious time in many a telegraph office and in many a sub-editor's room, but the speech, which contained 24,700 words, was nearly all in type in Manchester, Leeds, and Edinburgh before midnight—before the great statesman who delivered it had emptied his pomatum pot of voice restorative¹ and gone home to bed.

Smart though he may have proved himself elsewhere, a reporter who is just

¹ This pomatum pot has become indispensable to Mr. Gladstone's oratory. It gravely takes its place in the House whenever he is intent upon a great speech, and it played a particularly prominent part when he brought forward his five resolutions on the Eastern Question in the early part of the session of 1877. Mr. Lucy, describing the scene, or rather the pot, says: "It was an odd thing to see Gladstone just now taking advantage of the pause occasioned by the ringing cheers his eloquence drew forth to seize a short, thick-set pomatum pot, remove the cork, and proceed to refresh himself. History will scorn to

beginning his career on a parliamentary corps cannot fail, writes an accomplished journalist now in the gallery, to be impressed with the difficulties peculiar to the work. If his first "turn" should happen to be at "question time," he must be forgiven indeed for entertaining a feeling almost of despair. There is first and foremost the difficulty of hearing. Sitting aloft, he sees below him a body of four or five hundred gentlemen, any one of whom may suddenly rise and put an unexpected question, and

mention that modest pomatum pot, oval in shape, four inches in height, and supplied with an ill-fitting cork that baffled the frenzied efforts of the orator to replace it. And yet peradventure, without the assistance of this glass bottle, with its mysterious contents that looked like melted pomatum and might have been egg and sherry, we should never have had this great speech, with its broadly based arguments, its towering eloquence, and its subdued tone of triumph, proclaiming the accustomed scorn which minorities have for the brute force of numbers."

the Minister as often as not gives a reply in a tone which suggests that the answer is intended for that hon. member's private and particular ear. In the set answers to printed questions, again, some Ministers speak in such a perfunctory fashion, that they are audible only in certain parts of the gallery. Then you want to know the names of the questioners or speakers, and must have some acquaintance with the forms of the House. It is necessary, moreover, to keep up with current events, and there are occasions when to know, say, the purport of the last telegram from the Soudan, or to have some knowledge of the most recent "Incident with Portugal," makes all the difference in the world so far as reporting is concerned. By-and-by most of these difficulties disappear, but that of hearing is ever with you. Your ears, with practice, become longer, acoustically speaking; but in redacting your

notes of questions and answers at least you are frequently more or less dependent on your comrades. The staffs of the several papers represented in the House vary in number, that of the *Times*, of course, heading the list; while the provincial papers, some of which do not aim at a report of any considerable length, come last with three or four men each. This, however, does not apply to the *Scotsman* and *Glasgow Herald* newspapers, which have corps equal to those of some of the London dailies, and give even ampler reports than most of them. The "turns" vary according to circumstances. In "question time" they rarely exceed a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes on any staff, and the same holds good while speeches of prime importance are being delivered. It is customary for the reporter who is next in rotation to his colleague in the box to be in waiting a few minutes before the

appointed time, with a view to gather up the threads of the debate. On leaving the box, the reporter repairs to one of the writing-rooms. Of these there are a suite, well-appointed and comfortable. The "black" room—so called from the colour of the desks—and "No. 18"—a large committee-room in one of the corridors—are the most frequented; but there are smaller rooms just outside the gallery, and there is another room, with seats for about twenty, where you may smoke while you write. This latter is in addition to the smoke-room proper. It seldom happens that a reporter is unable to finish his redaction by the time he is again due in the gallery, for either he has ample time for the purpose owing to the strength of the staff, or he condenses. It frequently happens, indeed, during a dull debate, or while the House is in committee, that he is able to write out his turn in the box, and he has thus a considerable

interval which he may devote to himself. At these times—and there is generally a slack period of a couple of hours every night during the most important debates—he is able to dine or to spend a quiet hour in the smoke-room or in the tea-room. The authorities of the House some years ago placed a spacious room at the disposal of the gallery as a dining-room. The smoke-room, though not large, is comfortable; and here you may read the newspapers or play a game of draughts or chess. The tea-room, a chamber of about the same size, is furnished with newspapers, magazines, and books. The whole of the arrangements affecting the convenience and comfort of the reporters are under the control of a committee, elected annually from among and by the holders of non-transferable tickets. The transferable tickets, by the way, are used by leader writers and by reporters who are drafted in to give assist-

ance on very busy nights. In the House of Lords the boxes are allotted to the London papers with two or three exceptions; but such of the provincial papers as desire to have special reports of the proceedings of this chamber find no difficulty in obtaining a seat on the bench behind. The difficulties of hearing in this building are, as is well known, even greater than in the other House, and many amusing stories are told of the blunders which the reporter has fallen into in consequence. Immediately adjoining the Lords' gallery there is a spacious writing-room for the use of the reporters; but no other conveniences are provided,—and, indeed, they are unnecessary, the sittings, as a rule, being brief, and the reporters at once betaking themselves to the Commons.

“An interesting part of parliamentary reporting,” writes Mr. William Maxwell in an article on “Parliamentary Reporters,” “is

that known as 'lobbying.' The privilege of entering the lobby is enjoyed by a representative of each of the London newspapers and by provincial journals that have direct representatives in the gallery. Having carefully studied the morning and evening papers, and jotted down a few items upon which the public may show some curiosity, the lobby-man enters the square chamber at the entrance to the House and mingles with the members. At first he is disposed to welcome the advances of every parliamentary representative, but experience teaches him that those who are most anxious to cultivate this source of publicity are not always the men who have the information to give in exchange. He quickly learns who are in the confidence of prominent politicians, and who are their acknowledged intermediaries. The moment a man is in office he becomes as close as an oyster, and avoids the lobby to communicate his

information to favoured journals in a more private way. Mr. Gladstone is never seen in the lobby, though his son, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, serves the purpose, and put forward the memorable feeler on Home Rule. Mr. Chamberlain has for his henchmen Mr. Jesse Collings and Mr. Powell Williams, and Lord R. Churchill communicates through Mr. Hanbury and Mr. Jennings. Mr. W. H. Smith is never visible in this haunt of gossips, except when he enters the room of the Conservative Whip, who, with the Liberal Whip, is regarded as the official source of news. The hour of interviewing is immediately after Questions, or after dinner, when some members are not quite so reticent as they afterwards suppose. An accidental hint may lead to the disclosure of a confidential document, although such disclosures are not always the result of accident so much as of design. Mr. Lucy, who 'lobbies' for

a syndicate of six newspapers, and Mr. W. Ernest Pitt, who has charge of the interests of the Press Association,¹ are two of the most prominent lobby-men. Mr. Harry Furniss also 'lobbies' for *Punch*. Talking with a journalist, he transfers in a few strokes upon a piece of cardboard in the palm of his hand those striking caricatures that adorn the 'Essence of Parliament.' In this respect he resembles Mr. Leslie Ward, 'Spy,' and differs from the late Mr. Pellegrini, the

¹ The mention of the Press Association, established in 1868 by a syndicate of newspaper proprietors for the supply of news, reminds one of the best known journalistic figure connected with it—Mr. Walter Hepburn. His skill as a reporter, his wide and varied experience, and his high personal qualities, have won for him the respect and regard of all connected with the profession. Statesmen are proud to acknowledge him. No Gladstone visit is complete without him; indeed, the leader of the Liberal Party, referring not long ago to the work of pressmen in relation to politics, spoke of Mr. Hepburn as "my esteemed friend."

‘Ape,’ of *Vanity Fair*, who would study a member in the lobby for an hour or two, and then go home to draw those marvellous likenesses.”

The reporters’ gallery, which has been the scene of many changes during the present century, is now threatened with a novel invasion. Women have lately, for the good or evil of the country, entered into competition with men. They have become typewriters, workers of the telegraph and the telephone, clerks, printers, commercial travellers, doctors, dabblers in education, literature, and politics. One of their latest fields of enterprise is that of journalism; and they are quite prepared to describe a fashionable wedding or a Royal visit, to attend an execution or go at a moment’s notice to the seat of war, to criticise the Government at home in big type, or to settle the Eastern Question in a column “leader.” There is no telling to what

altitude their pertinacity and feminine ambition may lift them. It is possible that before the new century grows old England may have a female Prime Minister, and be defended by an Amazonian army. Women already take part in our local government—they may ultimately take part in our Imperial government, and spinster and matron sit at Westminster as the duly elected representatives of important constituencies.

Hitherto fairly content with her reign at home, woman has now determined to assume a more conspicuous position in English life beyond her own fireside. She intends to go her own way, and, adopting Shakespeare's words, says,—

“ . . . Being a woman, I will not be slack
To play my part in fortune's pageant ; ”

consequently man must accept the inevitable, for it is idle to attempt to check the

wind, or the incoming tide, or a woman's tongue. The modern woman, whether sweetly persuasive or aggressive, manages somehow to get what she wants; and as she has decided to enter the reporters' gallery, it is foolish of "my lords and gentlemen" to endeavour to keep her out. Already she has made formal application for admission to it.

Mr. Bradlaugh, rising in his place in the House of Commons on March 18th, 1890, asked whether, if a vacancy occurred in the reporters' gallery, there was any order of the House which would prevent the entertainment of an application from a lady for a place in that gallery.

The Speaker replied: "There is no order of the House against a lady being admitted as a reporter to the reporters' gallery. Within the last two or three days an application has been made to the Sergeant-at-Arms by a lady, stating that she was the

representative of a journal which advocated the political and social rights of women. The Sergeant-at-Arms, as I think very properly, replied that he had no authority to depart from the existing practice, nor would it be right for me to intervene in any way, unless I have the direct and express sanction of the House, in a matter possibly leading to consequences which it would be difficult at this moment for the House to foresee."

To quote the saying of a witty journalist, most people would think "The incident is now closed." But the Speaker, learned in the forms of the House, and possessing an exact estimate of his own authority, can have little knowledge of the female mind if he imagines that this lady will be checked, or put off, by such a reply. The consequences—whatever they are—will not appal her. The novelty will wear off. The woman will twist the House and its

hon. members round "her little finger," she will make a complete conquest of the Speaker, captivate the Sergeant-at-Arms, and with a smile on her face take her seat among the gentlemen of the Press in "the gallery," and begin a new era of reporting in Parliament.



v.

A Gossip about Shorthand.



CHAPTER V.

A GOSSIP ABOUT SHORTHAND.

IT is impossible to report verbatim a speech, for instance, like Mr. Gladstone's on the Home Rule question without the help of shorthand; and in the reporters' gallery every variety of shorthand is written, perhaps, with the exception of the system Xenophon used in taking down the words of Socrates, or that of the Mexican reporters, who, according to Prescott, came down and interviewed Cortes, writing in hieroglyphics all they saw, and returning rapidly with the drawings to the king.

Shorthand is no new-fangled notion. The scholar, the statesman, and the man of business have for centuries sighed for, and striven to get, a briefer system of writing than longhand. And though the history of shorthand, like the history of the Press, is a history of progress, yet it is singular to find signs in Roman stenography and in Greek shorthand very similar to those that ornament or disfigure the modern reporter's note-book.

That the Roman *notarii* attained proficiency in the art of shorthand writing is evident from the translation of Cæsar's speech in the Senate on the fate of Catiline, —a speech in the first person, though apparently not verbatim; a speech interesting, as showing the difference in the oratory of that and our own time. Cæsar did not crane forward on his seat, fidget about, and try in a white-heat to "catch the Speaker's eye." Nor did he begin his speech with

the mysterious expression, "Mr. Speaker," that falls so glibly from the lips of some of our own members of Parliament. His speech might be studied with advantage by many a politician who bores the House, even while flattering himself that he is an orator.

"Conscript Fathers," he said, with dignity, "it becomes all men who deliberate on doubtful matters to clear their minds of hatred, friendship, wrath, and pity, because there can be no perception of the truth where these obstruct; nor can any one, I care not who, fulfil at the same time the impulses of inclination and the dictates of duty." There is neither personality nor slang in the speech, which reaches the zenith of its declamation in the phrase "By the immortal gods," and contains the remarkable passage, "So far as the question of the penalty is concerned, indeed we are able to say this, as the matter stands, that in grief

and care death is a relief from affliction and not a punishment, that it eliminates all the miseries of mortals, and that beyond its bourne there is no place either for sorrow or for joy."

Roman shorthand, like the Roman Empire, declined and fell; but the desire for swift writing broke out in other lands, and nearly every Continental nation has to-day its particular system of shorthand, the development of, or improvement upon, some cruder style introduced years ago. A story from the Arabic of Abu Muhammad Ben Ishah tells how a Chinaman, "who had acquired the Arabic speech and writing in less than five months, took down from the lips of one of his teachers sixteen books of Galen." This story may be true, though it sounds like an extract from *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*; but it is possible to believe the statement that stenography was known

in Russia in the latter part of the seventeenth century, "when a certain Professor Wolke used to reproduce discourses by means of his own system of shorthand." France has been striving, with more or less zeal, since the reign of Louis XIV., to bring out a perfect system of stenography ; and in Germany the names Gabelsberger and Stolze are inseparable from similar efforts.

England, however, has been more prolific in the invention and adaptation of shorthand systems. It is a fact, proved by MSS. in the British Museum, that Charles I. wrote shorthand, and that the Marquis of Worcester invented one mode of writing it. Since the publication of Bright's system in 1588, a great number of English shorthand alphabets have been given to the world, the most conspicuous among them being Bales', in 1597 ; Gurney's, 1753 ; Byrom's, 1767 ; Blanchard's,

1779 ; Taylor's, 1788 ; and Pitman's, 1838.

There is only one original copy of Dr. Bright's book remaining. It is in the Bodleian Library, but there is a reprint of it in the Bailey collection of shorthand works now on the shelves of the Manchester Reference Library. The title of the book is very quaint,—*Characterie: An Arte of Shorte, Swift, and Secret Writing by Character, invented by Timothe Bright, Doctor of Phisike*,—and it bears the date 1588, with the caution, “forbidding all other to print the same.” The work is dedicated to Queen Elizabeth in the following words:—

“Cicero did account it worthie his labour, and no less profitable to the Roman common weale (most gracious Sovereign), to invent a speedie kinde of wryting by character, as Plutarch reporteth in the life of Cato, the younger. This in-

vention was increased afterward by Seneca : that the number of characters grew to 7,000. Whether through injurie of time, or that men gave it over for tediousness of learning, nothing remaineth extant of Cicero's invention at this day. Upon consideration of the great use of such a kind of writing, I have invented the like : of few characters, short and easy, every character answering a word : my invention on meere English without precept or imitation of any. The uses are divers : short, that a swift hande may therewith write orations or publike actions of speach, uttered as becometh the gravitie of such actions, verbatim. Secrete, as no kind of wryting like, and herein (besides other properties) excelling the wryting by letters and alphabet, in that, nations of strange language, may hereby communicate their meaning together in wryting, though of sundrie tongues. It is reported of the people of

China, that they have no other kinde, and so traffike together many provinces of that kingdom, ignorant one of an others speach. Their characters are very long, and hard to make, that a dozen of mine may be made as soon as one of theirs: Besides they wanting an alphabet, fall into an infinite number, which is a thing that greatly chargeth memory and may discourage the learner. This my invention I am emboldened to dedicate unto your Majesty, in that among other your princelie virtues your Majesty is wont to approve of every good and profitable learning."

The rest of the dedication flatters the Queen rather at the expense of Cicero; then follows an instruction to the reader how the art of Bright's shorthand is to be learned. "Thou art first to learn the Characterie words by heart, and therewith the making of the figure to the character, to doo it readily, and clean, then, to be able

to join every character to the word pronounced, without book, or sight of any pattern before thee." It is curious that in his "Characterie Table" some of the signs are exactly like those in Pitman's system—for instance, the form for "anoint" is exactly like the phonographic sign for "account," and the character for the word "praise" like the phonographic sign for "secrets." The system reveals much thought and ingenuity, and in its day must have been considered little short of marvellous; yet some of the forms are very clumsy and difficult, and the reporter, if he had to depend upon this system to-day to note down verbatim any statesman's speech, would be inclined to break out into swear words if he came across many signs such as that for "liberalitie," a whimsical, intricate formation that would check the most reckless pencil in its wildest flight after the fastest speaker.

The book-lover would revel in the shorthand library in which Bright's "Characterie" has the most honoured place. The Bailey collection consists of no fewer than seven hundred volumes, and these contain practically all that the English mind has conceived in the shape of swift writing. Many of the books are yellow with age, curious in illustration and typography, and all interesting as showing the steady growth of shorthand during the past three centuries.

One of the most interesting is the second edition, published in 1627, of Edmund Willis's book, "*An Abbreviation of Writing by Character*, wherein is summarily contained a Table which is an Abstract of the whole Art, with Plaine and Easie Rules for the speedy performance thereof without any other Tutor." Some of the signs he gives are a strange jumble; but the book is valuable, not only because of its striving after a better system of writing, but because

of the good advice it gives to the learner—advice as applicable to him now as at the time this old faded book was new and bright with its red-ink characters sprinkling its pages. “For the more plainnesse in reading this art, you must keep your stops. . . . And for your better perfection in this art, take one observation more from me, which is, That when you are in companie, and heare a word spoken, doe but consider in your minde, how you would express the same in writing, and the custome of this will bring you to great readiness ; as I myself by good experience have found.” On the last page are these fulsome rhymes :—

“IN LAUDEM AUTHORIS.

“That which so many have desired to gaine,
By Wit and Labour of the mind and brain,
And yet could not, by Reason’s carefull eye,
Find where the depth of Truth’s perfections lye :
Thou hast by Art, upon such Judgement grounded,
And so exact a method hath propounded

By Characters, to write with such a speed
As may of all be thought a worthy Deed :
In which Rare Art, may well be understood,
How Willis' Will is to doe all men good."

"John Willis, B.D.," writes Mr. Axon, jun., who has catalogued and mentally roamed through these books, "was author of the *Art of Stenographie*, the twelfth edition of which in the Bailey collection is almost unique, no copy being known to Dr. Westby-Gibson when he compiled his exhaustive *Bibliography of Shorthand*. Thomas Shelton's *Tachygraphy*, of which Mr. Bailey had the 1641 edition, was an important work in its day, and, after the fashion of the time, the author prefixed to this edition commendatory verses — some of them marked by fulsome adulation—from various of his students. What would be thought if a book of the nineteenth century were to be heralded, as Shelton's *Tachygraphy* was, in the following lines, signed

by Nath. Mason, of Gonville and Caius College?—

“‘TO THE AUTHOR.

“‘Why should I praise thy Art in writing, when
Thy Art and praise surmounts the praise of men ;
For if thy way of writing had been showne
To ages past, *Printing* had ne’r beene knowne,
Nor the invention sought or valued ; when
The *Presse* can scarcely overrunne thy Pen :
So that what honour’s due unto the Quill,
Or glory unto those that have the skill
In faire *Orthographie*, their titles stand
As pages to attend upon thy hand.’

Two of Jeremiah Rich’s pretty little volumes, measuring only $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, are in the collection, as is also the anonymous first edition of the ‘*Mercury, or the Secret and Swift Messenger* ; Shewing, how a man may with Privacy and Speed communicate his Thoughts to a Friend at any distance,’ 1641. This was written by John Wilkins, Cromwell’s brother-in-law, who after the Restoration became Bishop of Chester and

one of the founders of the Royal Society. The second edition of the *Mercury*, dated 1694, has the author's name. William Mason, a shorthand teacher in London, was author of a system which was much used in the seventeenth and early in the eighteenth centuries. The Bailey collection contains several of his numerous works, including his earliest, *A Pen Pluck'd from an Eagle's Wing* (1672), and *Arts Advancement* (1682). To the latter is prefixed an engraved portrait of the author, and underneath appear the following lines, from the pen of 'S. W.,' which show the rivalry that existed then, as now, between authors of different systems:—

“Let Shelton, Rich, and all the rest go down,
Bring here your Golden Pen and Laurel Crown,
Great Mason's nimbler Quill out-strips ye Winde,
And leaves ye Voyce, almost ye Thoughts behind.
In vain may Momus snarl; He soars so high,
Praise he commands, and Envy does defie.’

When we consider that Mason's system was partly hieroglyphic and required an immense amount of memory work to be of any use, this praise certainly seems to border on exaggeration. Peter Annet, a native of Liverpool, is represented by the whole of his shorthand books; and John Byrom, of Manchester, by four copies of his posthumous *Universal English Shorthand* (1767), and by numerous variations and improvements by Molineux, Gawtress, and others. The whole of the different editions of the *Polygraphy* of Aulay Macaulay, the St. Ann's Square¹ tea-dealer, are in the collection, and the other local systems are here in more or less completeness. Amongst them may be mentioned the *Stenography*, printed at Poughill in 1806 by George Nicholson, previously of Manchester, and remembered as one of the promoters of cheap and well-got-up books,

¹ St. Ann's Square, Manchester.

and also as an uncompromising advocate of a non-flesh diet. In the *Rudiments of Shorthand*, by Thomas Andrews (1744), we have a book that has hitherto escaped record by bibliographers. Another unrecorded and stillborn but pretentious work is *The World's Jewel ; or, the Oxford Book of Short Hand* (1759), by the Rev. Mr. Jonathan Smart, who, unlike his predecessors of the previous century, who were content to have their systems puffed by their friends, preferred to do the puffing himself. On his title-page we find the following verse, presumably his own:—

“Go forth, my little Book, and loudly tell,
If you've an Equal, none can you excel:
Of this, with justice, truly you may boast,
All purchase learning, cheaply, at my cost.
Here Time's well spent—whoever in it looks,
Aloud proclaims—This is the Book of Books!”

Will it be believed that the ‘Book of Books’ contains only thirty-six duodecimo

pages? Gurney, Mavor, Pitman, and all the modern attempts find a place in the collection. Useless systems are sandwiched between systems that have done excellent service, even if they are now forgotten by all but those who, like the late collector of this library, find few things so interesting as old books. A portion of Mr. Bailey's shorthand library consisted of manuscripts written in shorthand, amongst which may be named a beautiful MS. entitled *A Choice Selection of Prose and Poetry*, and written in shorthand by Peter Robey, at Mr. Birchall's School, Manchester, in 1818; letters from Cambridge, by Richard Clowes, brother of the well-remembered Rector of St. John's, Manchester; and several volumes of the works of Dr. Philip Doddridge."

Though Taylor's and Gurney's shorthand are somewhat extensively written in the reporters' gallery, Pitman's is the most

popular system, and seems likely to increase rather than decrease in favour there.¹

Phonography, as its name implies, is a system of writing by sound; or, in other words, the reporter does not take down the word according to its spelling, but according to its pronunciation. The alphabet consists of thin and thick strokes and curves for consonants, and dots and short strokes for vowels. But the system is very much abbreviated by the use of grammalogues and phraseograms as the learner advances; so that a student who has thoroughly mastered phonography has no difficulty in following the most rapid speaker. It is a system that has had to endure much obloquy. Hundreds of

¹ Of the 94 pressmen in the gallery, 60 write Pitman's system, 12 Taylor's, 6 Gurney's, 3 Lewis', 1 Gurney-Taylor's, 1 Lowe's, 1 Byrom's, 1 Peachey's, 1 Everett's, 1 Melville-Bell's, 1 Mavor's, 1 Graham's, and 1 Jane's.

youths, fired with ambition to get on the Press, have sought to acquire a knowledge of it. Many have struggled through the alphabet, and perhaps a little further, and then given up the study in despair. But this is not the fault of the system: the fault is with the too easily daunted student. Nevertheless, the system is not perfect; and one of its most glaring defects is the liability—especially in reporting a rapidly delivered speech—to misread one word for another, both words having exactly the same outlines, and perhaps not a vowel to give them individuality. This defect has led to many errors and ludicrous mistakes in the reporter's copy; but with practice and care it is a pitfall that may invariably be avoided—nay, is avoided by experienced and thoughtful reporters, who are not only skilful in note-taking, but use their brains, and are wide awake to the context, when transcribing. It is possible

that some system of note-taking may yet be invented that will put Pitman's entirely in the shade—a system easier to learn, and less difficult both in writing and transcription into longhand; but phonography, with all its faults, will never be lightly thrown aside, for a system must have some merit in it that enables a reporter to give accurately verbatim speeches by such statesmen as Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, Lord Randolph Churchill, Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Goschen, Sir William Harcourt, Mr. John Morley, and even Lord Sherbrooke. The latter, now enjoying the serenity of the Upper House, was, before his elevation to the peerage, familiarly known among the reporters as "Bobby" Lowe. He is one of the most difficult speakers of this century to report, so peculiar and rapid is his delivery. At Grantham, not many years ago, a reporter having the misfortune to take a check note

of his speech with a view to obtain accuracy, got into a wild state of exasperation at the orator's freaks, and growled, gnawing his moustache fiercely, while his pencil staggered desperately over his note-book, and great drops of perspiration stood on his brow: "I would rather report the d—— than 'Bobby' Lowe!"





VI.

The Reporter's Work.



CHAPTER VI.

THE REPORTER'S WORK.



KNOWLEDGE of shorthand, and the capacity to write and transcribe it, is not by any means the only acquirement necessary to make a competent reporter; but it is practically the foundation on which the reporter must build his reputation, and the study is advantageous, not merely because of the admirable training shorthand gives to hand and brain, but because it broadens and enlarges the mind, and often instils a desire for wider knowledge and greater culture.

There is a saying, "Once a reporter,

always a reporter;" but the reporters themselves have practically shown the falsity of this adage by relinquishing the note-book and pencil for more ambitious, though not more honourable, pursuits. Many men have sprung from the reporters' table to eminence—men like Charles Dickens, Shirley Brooks, John Campbell, and Justice Talfourd. Dr. W. Russell, famous as the *Times* special correspondent in the Crimea, was a gallery man. Sir Charles Russell, Sir Edward Clarke, Baron Alderson, Judge Powell, Mr. Registrar Hazlitt, were parliamentary reporters. Sir James Hannen was also in the gallery,—where, by-the-bye, some judge in embryo is probably now taking notes.

A writer in the *Entertainment Gazette* says: "At least, two gallery men of our own day have become members of that Legislature whose proceedings they had so

often reported and commented upon. One was the late Mr. Dunbar; the other is Mr. Justin M'Carthy, whose leaders in the *Daily News* are models of newspaper article writing. Mr. Frederick Clifford, who was one of the *Times'* parliamentary corps of reporters for several years, and London correspondent of one of the Sheffield papers, left the gallery to act as chief sub-editor of the *Times*. He gained some celebrity as a law reporter in conjunction with Mr. Pembroke Stephens, Q.C., who was also a *Times'* gallery man for a long period, relinquishing his press work as briefs came in. Mr. Stephens' career is, if what the world would call uneventful, a remarkable one. He made his first essay in parliamentary reporting as a member of the *Morning Post* corps, and (as others have done before and since) left the *Post* for the *Times*. He gained his early laurels in the committee-rooms,

local influence securing him any number of briefs in Dublin cases brought before Select Committees at Westminster, and he is one of the few men who have become successful both in the realm of journalism and at the bar without making a single enemy. Mr. Richard Kisbey was another Irish barrister-reporter who emigrated from the *Post* to the *Times*. If he did little or nothing at the bar, it was because opportunities and briefs never came to him. He was an efficient all-round reporter, and, with Spellin, may be truly said to have died in harness, for in one of his reporting expeditions in 1882, for the *Times*, he caught cold from exposure to the fearful weather, and was taken from among us in his prime. One of the brightest young men who ever went into the gallery is now part proprietor of the *Bristol Daily Times and Mirror*. Goodenough Taylor did two men's work every day of his life

for close upon fifteen years, and apparently thrived upon it. From ten to four he was at Somerset House in the Legacy-Duty Department, from the office he went straight down to the House, and did his full share of reporting for the *Morning Post*, and between while he was sending telegrams to his Bristol paper, then under the joint control of Mr. Joseph Leach and Mr. 'Tom' Taylor (Goodenough's father). This was not all. Like most gallery men, young Taylor lived at a long distance from the scene of his labours, and would often walk morning and night some six miles. It is very seldom that you find more than one member of a family engaged in reporting. The Bussys furnish a striking exception to the rule. No one who has done gallery work during the last five-and-twenty or thirty years is unacquainted with one or more members of this reporting family. George, Henry, and Bernard

Bussy are all marvellously accurate note-takers, and are known far and wide as among the ablest men that London has ever produced."

To the list of those who have stepped from the reporters' gallery to the floor of the House must be added the name of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., a most capable and enterprising journalist, who has in his conduct of the *Star* developed entirely new features in journalism, opening out many additional paths to the reporter and the literary man, and doing his work day by day with a celerity and dash that has sometimes startled more cautious newspaper men. Of Mr. Justin M'Carthy's career some idea may be obtained from a reference the hon. member made to it in a speech he delivered at the Boston Press Club. "I began," he said, "as a reporter. I filled various departments of journalism; indeed, I endeavoured to fill

a great many departments which now, in my mature years, I know were a good deal beyond my strength. In our early years we begin fearlessly, and, whether we know anything about a person or not, with the rare instinct of a journalist, we valiantly rush to the front, and we either do or we do not do our duty. I have acted in almost every department open to a journalist. I have been foreign correspondent; I have been musical critic—I never knew anything about music; I have been art critic; and, on one or two occasions, I reached the triumph of my genius by describing an agricultural show. Once only I essayed the part of foreign correspondent. I did the coronation of a great king, the present Emperor of Germany,* and on that occasion I had the pleasure to be presented to the greatest statesman in Europe, Prince Bismarck.

* The late German Emperor.

I thought on one occasion of being a war correspondent. I had been for some time a reporter in the House of Commons, and then became foreign editor, and then editor-in-chief; and, having climbed to the top of the tree, I then climbed down again."

Mr. W. H. Mudford, the editor of the *Standard*, was a reporter. Mr. W. Senior, the angling editor of the *Field*, and special correspondent of the *Daily News*, was a reporter. Mr. H. W. Lucy, appointed editor of the latter paper some three years ago, still prefers the gallery, and wrote from the Reform Club on June 6th, 1887: "From the day I first sat in my editor's chair I have hankered after my box in the House of Commons, and now I am going back to it." Nor do these names exhaust the list of those who by ability and indomitable perseverance have risen to high positions in the various professions after years of reporting toil.

Some of the men who have made a

name graduated in the country, which has long been a training-ground for the reporters' gallery, and has sent to London many talented journalists.

There is perhaps no life so varied and exciting as that of the reporter on the provincial daily—no life perhaps in which a man can crowd so much experience. For him there is little rest. If he has not to rise at daybreak and journey by train to a meeting in a town, or in some almost inaccessible village, miles away, he may saunter down to the office about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and that is probably the last opportunity he has for sauntering until he goes home, generally after midnight. His work is unremitting as a statesman's, and frequently more imperative. Here is a record of a day's work, taken haphazard out of a chief reporter's diary—a list of the day's engagements with the initials of the members of the staff attached:—

- S. Police and Inquests.
- L. Town Council Committees and Local Improvements.
- P. Steam Tram Accident at Bradford.
- H. Diocesan Conference.
- A. Wife Murder.
- F. Railway Extensions in the West Riding.
- M. Colliery Explosion.
- B. Lord Salisbury at Nottingham.
- J. The Theatres.
- T. Double Execution at Armley.
- R. Lecture on English Humorists.
- C. Burglary.
- W. Bishop of Ripon on Temperance.
- D. Mill Fire.

In reporting a big political speech—say Lord Salisbury is speaking at Manchester, Edinburgh, or Leeds—the process is much the same as that adopted in reporting debates in the House, except that the staff consists of what is termed “a ring,” is made up of one reporter for each newspaper requiring a verbatim report, and the turns are shorter—two, three, or five minutes. About eight reporters are, as a rule

"in the ring ;" and working in alphabetical order, hand over hand, note-taking for two minutes, and, transcribing on flimsy, they manage to keep written up to the speaker ; and soon after the orator has resumed his seat, amid the loud and continued cheering of his political admirers, the reporter who has had the last turn is writing, not without secret delight, "End of message."

Every reporter, no doubt, has a vivid recollection of his first admission to "a ring." It is a trying time. If you do not take a good note, and falter in transcription ; if you fail to take up your next turn at the moment the chief, watch in hand, gives you the hint, the note-taking arrangement is thrown out of gear, and all round the ring there is either muttered thunder or icy reticence. But with skilful reporters—and the men allowed "in the ring" are generally known to be thoroughly up to their work—the task of reporting a great political

meeting is a comparatively light one. There is an exact subdivision of labour. Turn after turn is completed with regularity; and with a shrewd, imperturbable chief to rigidly allot the time, and a nimble comrade to collect and assort the flimsy, there is scarcely any phase of a reporter's life that is pleasanter than "doing a big meeting."

His anxiety and toil come rather in what appears to be less important work. Take one day's engagements in the diary, for instance. Every engagement takes time to fulfil. The information has to be obtained, often not without difficulty and annoyance. Whether referring to some important development of trade, or exploit in exploration, or statesman's policy, or despotic oppression and cruelty abroad, or great disaster in pit at home; whether relating to fiendish tragedy, to work of philanthropy, to the splendid courage that now and then reveals the true hero in the

workshop, or the daring and self-sacrifice of our lifeboatmen in the stormiest sea that beats upon the coast; whether touching upon some noted law case, or new scheme of railway enterprise, or modern triumph of engineering skill; or upon the latest political craze, the newest fad ostensibly for the good of the nation and the welfare of the people, but possibly advanced to gratify the vanity of or to materially benefit the hon. member whose pet cause it is,—every jot and tittle of this news when obtained, and the libel carefully sifted out of it, has to be put in attractive form to interest the newspaper reader.

The reporter, it will be seen, is sometimes a visitor unwelcome; for the enraged father does not like to be questioned about his daughter's elopement, nor does the manufacturer, tracked by some vague rumour on 'Change, care to disclose to the indefatigable and unabashed pressman

the coming downfall of his firm. Whether welcome or unwelcome, however, the reporter is always busy, devoting the day, and frequently the best half of the night, to the interests of the paper he represents. Not only must he be a capable shorthand writer, but a vigorous and picturesque descriptive writer; and while not forgetting what is due to the dignity of the Press, he must be a man of the world, courteous to high and low.

Special aptitude, as well as long training, are necessary to produce men of this stamp; yet they are to be found in nearly every daily newspaper office of any influence in the provinces,—men like Mr. R. W. Spencer, of the *Manchester Guardian*, now chief of the sub-editorial staff, after a notable career as a reporter; Mr. J. Cash, chief reporter of the same paper; Mr. W. Lister, of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*; Mr. H. S. Green, of the *Manchester Courier*;

Mr. W. M. Gilbert, of the *Scotsman* ; Mr. T. Reid, of the *Glasgow Herald* ; Mr. S. Parkinson, of the *Yorkshire Post* ; Mr. Carruthers, of the *Leeds Mercury* ; Mr. J. Hadley, of the *Birmingham Post* ; Mr. Francis Neale, of the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* ; Mr. J. Atkins, of the *Sheffield Independent* ; Mr. S. G. Harrison, of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* ; Mr. W. Heenan, of the *Newcastle Chronicle* ; Mr. W. J. Snowdon, of the *Newcastle Daily Journal* ; Mr. J. Jenkins, of the *Liverpool Daily Post* ; Mr. J. B. Mackenzie, of the *Liverpool Mercury* ; Mr. T. J. McWeeney, of the *Freeman's Journal* ; Mr. G. K. Magee, of the *Irish Times* ; Mr. H. Bond, of the *Dublin Daily Express* ; Mr. Taylor, of the *York Herald* ; Mr. Mallett, of the *Bradford Observer* ; Mr. A. L. Maddock, of the *Nottingham Guardian*—and the list might be greatly extended, — experienced chiefs, directing large and efficient report-

ing corps, from the ranks of which, now and then, men enter the Press Gallery of the House of Commons, or join the descriptive staffs of the London morning newspapers, or climb into the editorial chair, or strive, and sometimes successfully, for fame in the wider field of English literature.



VII.

Some Experiences and Adventures
of Reporters.



CHAPTER VII.

SOME EXPERIENCES AND ADVENTURES OF REPORTERS.

THE reporter has never found life monotonous. His exciting experiences began early. The Emperor Severus cut the finger nerves and sentenced to transportation a stenographer who had the misfortune to misreport a cause in the Imperial Court. Cassien, a shorthand writer at the trial of Metellus, the centurion, was treated with even greater cruelty. The accused, having become a Christian, had declined to serve as a soldier, and seems to have aroused the reporter's sympathy. "Being exasperated at what he con-

sidered the unjust decision of the judge," says Anderson, in his *History of Shorthand*, "the shorthand writer launched at the magistrate's head his tablets. For this all too speedy impulse he was ordered to sympathise more fully with the centurion whose cause he so warmly espoused, and with whom he had to suffer death, the judge, with grim humour, appointing the pupils of the unhappy man to be his executioners, and the instruments of execution their iron styles, with which they 'tore him to pieces,' reciting, as they did so, 'Why do you complain? 'Twas yourself who gave us the iron and armed our hand; this is the way we pay you back the thousand notes you taught us, and which, spite of our tears, you made us learn.'"

Something of the same spirit lingers in our own time, for not long ago the member for an English mining constituency, enraged at the report, or misreport, of his speech on

the vexed question of capital and labour, sent this telegram to the editor of a Yorkshire daily: "Your reporter deserves lynching."

The special correspondent, a man like Russell or Forbes, is expected to meet with adventure and peril—he is paid to undergo the hazard of war; but the daily newspaper reporter, though his only glimpse of the battlefield, perhaps, has been the autumn manœuvre and the sham-fight, is frequently in danger almost as great as Russell's in the Crimea, and that through which Forbes came scathless in the grim engagement at Plevna. In *The Life of Charles Dickens*, by John Forster, it is shown that the novelist, during his career as a reporter on the *Morning Chronicle*, had one or two narrow escapes, at least, of breaking his neck. "I have had," Dickens wrote, "to charge for half a dozen breakdowns in half a dozen times as many miles. I have had to charge for the damage

of a great-coat from the drippings of a blazing wax candle in writing through the smallest hours of the night in a swift-flying carriage and pair. I have had to charge for all sorts of breakages fifty times in a journey without question, such being the ordinary results of the pace which we went at. I have charged for broken hats, broken luggage, broken chaises, broken harness—everything but a broken head, which is the only thing they would have grumbled to pay for.”

At the second annual dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund, in 1865, he spoke in a similar strain, saying: “I have often transcribed for the printer, from my shorthand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise

and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter, I strolled into the castle yard there to identify, for the amusement of a friend, the spot on which I once 'took,' as we used to call it, an election speech of Lord John Russell at the Devon contest, in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds in that division of the county, and under such a pelting rain that I remember two good-natured colleagues who chanced to be at leisure held a pocket-handkerchief over my note-book, after the fashion of a State canopy in an ecclesiastical procession. I have worn my knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons ; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords,

where we used to be huddled together like so many sheep—kept in waiting, say, until the Woolsack might want re-stuffing. Returning home from exciting political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been, in my time, belated on miry by-roads, towards the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken postboys, and have got back in time for publication, to be received with never-forgotten compliments by the late Mr. Black, coming in the broadest Scotch from the broadest of hearts I ever knew.”

These exploits are worth recording ; but in the reporter of to-day they arouse no surprise, for he has often in the course of his duty to go through more exciting experiences than ever fell to the lot of the

author of *Pickwick*, and never thinks he has performed any feat at all. The reporter of to-day has to be courageous, sharp as a hawk, mentally untiring, physically enduring. He comes in contact with everybody, from monarchs to beggars, from noblemen to nobodies. He sees the tragedy and comedy of human life, its cynicism and toadyism, its patient, struggling, and feverish ambition, its sham and subterfuge, its lavish wealth and deepest poverty, its joy and sorrow, its good deeds and most hideous crimes. His is a strange career, with its constant predicaments, difficulties, and anxieties; but it is an attractive, fascinating career to many because of its wondrous variety.

Thunder threw Cæsar into convulsions; but a reporter will cheerfully go up in a balloon to get facts about a thunderstorm. Nothing daunts him. If his chief only "puts him down" in the diary for the most perilous engagement, he will prove as full of—

“Adventurous spirit
As to o’erwalk a current roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.”

When “on duty” he does not admit the word danger into his vocabulary. He will risk death at a Fenian meeting, go down a pit choked with after-damp, penetrate into the vilest fever den, take notes in the midst of a riot, disguise himself as a tramp and sleep in a lodging-house—go anywhere and report anything at any time of the day or night, armed only with his pencil and note-book, and a splendid self-reliance.

He rises, as eagerly as a trout to a fly, at a railway accident or a colliery explosion; but they must be “serious,” “alarming,” “fearful,” “terrible,” before “he lays himself out,” before he nerves himself to write graphically about these disasters. Nothing upsets him. Had he been in Pompeii when the city was buried by the

volcano's outpourings, his only anxiety would have been to get off a good account—about a column—to the newspaper he represented, and also to the journals for which he corresponded on salary or at so much per line.

Not long ago a breathless citizen, covered with brickdust, that brought out in picturesque boldness the whimsical ridges in his crushed hat—the man had just narrowly escaped death—rushed into the office of a well-known English daily, and said that a fearful boiler explosion had just occurred at some works not far away. “Is it a good thing?” asked the reporter. “Anybody killed?” Though this gentleman of the Press is one of the most tender-hearted of men, he looks upon disaster and tragedy chiefly through professional spectacles, gauging their importance not so much on account of the suffering and grief that follow, but according to the sensation they are likely to create in the newspaper.

The reporter's versatility is boundless. No subject is too strange or too abstruse for his pen. He will describe the grim horror of a private execution, the perils of shipwreck, and the marriage festival with equal facility.

Now and then he makes the most mirth-provoking errors—for instance, when he speaks of "Helen of Troy" as "Ellen of Troy," and reports the Earl of Carnarvon as saying, "In these days clergymen are expected to have the wisdom and learning of a journeyman tailor," instead of "the wisdom and learning of Jeremy Taylor."

The Dean's face would pucker with fun when, after the debate on vestments in the Chapter House of Wells Cathedral, at which he said, "If some one should feel disposed to make me a present of a cope with decent sleeves I shall have no objection to wear it in the cathedral," he found himself reported in a London daily

as ready "to conduct Divine service in a coat with a dozen sleeves."

The late Bishop Fraser no doubt laughed heartily when he read the report of his speech on waifs and strays—a speech that gave him credit for wondrous solicitude on behalf of the homeless youth of Manchester. "We take these children out of the street," said his lordship, "we clothe them, we tend them, we *watch* over them." And the reporter of one of the morning papers made the Bishop say of the lucky outcasts, "We take these children out of the street, we clothe them, we tend them—we *wash* them." What a splendid example of self-sacrifice and "good works" Bishop Fraser must have given when he picked a city Arab out of the throng of the Manchester Piccadilly, took him home, and washed him!

But the humour of it is eclipsed by many other slips. "My brethren," remarked an eminent divine in a cathedral in the

northern province, "all is yellow to the jaundiced eye;" and the reporter transcribed it, "All is hollow to the jaunty style."

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" once exclaimed Sir William Harcourt, in one of his most emphatic political speeches; and the reporter improved the quotation in this novel fashion: "Great Diana! What a farce this is!"—a drastic estimate of the statesman's utterances, only outdone by Mr. Caine's description of him a session or two ago as a "political lurcher." The poetic orator who quoted the lines,—

"O come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyné,"

probably muttered to himself when he turned to his own speech in the newspaper with delight, and read the practical reporter's rendering of the quotation:—

"O come, thou goddess fair and free;
In heaven she crept and froze her knee."

More excusable, perhaps, was the reporter's error in the transcription of Russell Lowell's speech. Describing the throb and movement of life in London, the American author and diplomatist quoted from the Earth Spirit's speech in *Faust*, and given in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* :—

"'Tis thus at the roaring Loom of Time I ply—
Weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by,"—

rendered by the reporter "the roaring loom of the *Times*."

The writer of "Walnuts and Wine," in the *Yorkshire Weekly Post*, gossiping about the mistakes of reporters, says : "A rare good story from the Irish law courts was told recently in the course of the judgment delivered by Chief Baron Palles, on the application for a new trial of the libel action against the *Irish Times* by Mr. Matthew Harris, M.P., who had been awarded £1,000 damages, the newspaper having

incorrectly reported, by the omission of the word 'not,' that Delaney had deposed that Mr. Harris was an Invincible. The Chief Baron held that the damages were excessive, and granted a new trial unless the plaintiff agreed to accept £200, including the £50 paid into Court. Baron Dowse concurred, and said the damages were not only excessive, but preposterous. Mistakes, he said, often occurred in papers, and an instance arose in reference to himself. Addressing a Cork jury, he quoted the well-known line from Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*:—

"Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay."

What was his horror to find himself reported in a local paper as having said,—

"Better fifty years of Europe than a circus in Bombay."

The joke told against the American reporter who transcribed an orator's incorrect quotation *Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed major*

veritas, into 'I may cuss Plato, I may cuss Socrates, said Major Veritas,' is hardly a better of its kind than this one of Baron Dowse."*

Another journalist writes : "A compliment to the late John Bright was turned into an insult : 'I have sat at the feet of the gamecock of Birmingham,' should have read 'Gamaliel.' Viscount Cranbrook should have been associated with the Low Moor Ironworks, and not the Low Moor Workhouse. 'He fleeced his thousand flocks,' ought to have been 'he leased his thousand lots ;' and 'the blasted Irishmen,' that roused the indignation of a Celtic reporter against an innocent member,

* Even a more amusing story is told of another reporter's mistranscription of Baron Dowse's words. The judge expressed the opinion that Irish justices of the peace could no more state a case in legal language than they could write a Greek ode ; and the reporter gravely wrote : "Baron Dowse expressed the opinion that Irish justices of the peace could no more state a case in legal language than they could *ride a Greek goat*."

was nothing more than 'the Glasgow Irishmen.' These errors are due chiefly to imperfect hearing; a few also may be attributed to bad writing, as: 'Those lovely eyes be damned;' and 'Behold the martyr with his shirt on fire,' for, 'Behold the martyr in a sheet of fire.' Inability to hear distinctly is the principal difficulty with which reporters have to contend, and has led to some amusing guesses at truth, as when the Prime Minister was reported, with unanimity that betrayed careful comparison, to have declared that our late representative at Washington was in a state of 'suspended animation.' "

The Archbishop of York, who has an infinite sense of humour, must have chuckled when he read in a newspaper printed in his diocese that he had become a poet. "Those beautiful lines by Bishop Ebor," innocently wrote the reporter, who knew far more about cricket than verse, and had never heard of Bishop Heber.

"Newspaper Reporters and Reporting" is the subject of a lecture given by Mr. James Stewart, and he chats pleasantly and shrewdly about their ways and work. "Another story," he says, "is that of a reporter who was not familiar with Tennyson's well-known lines :—

' Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.'

A speaker concluded an eloquent speech by quoting these lines, and he went to sleep that night thinking how well the peroration would look in type the next morning. His feelings may be imagined when he bought a copy of the paper, and found that his peroration was made to run: 'The speaker concluded by remarking that in his opinion kind hearts were more than coronets, and that simple faith was superior to Norman blood.' Equally funny are the mistakes sometimes made through haste or carelessness in transcribing the shorthand.

'Breezy atmosphere,' in a recent speech by Professor Blackie, in which he was dilating on the glories of Edinburgh, became 'greasy atmosphere;' 'attenders at clubs in the West End,' in a memorable speech of Mr. John Bright, was transmogrified into 'vendors of gloves in the West End;' 'Died from recent hæmorrhage,' the verdict of a coroner's jury on the body of a woman, was changed into 'Died from her recent marriage,' evidently the blunder of some misanthropic bachelor reporter. In this way, as Professor Blackie said in the letter in which he pointed out the above slip in his own speech, the reporters are unconsciously the means of enlivening speeches which might otherwise be dull reading. Although public meetings receive a great deal of his attention, the reporter's duties do not by any means end there. He has to be equally ready to describe a prize-fight or a religious service, an agricultural show

or a wedding, and, especially in the smaller towns, to write learnedly on musical art, and dramatic matters. His life, although pleasant in many ways, is, speaking generally, exceedingly laborious, and that the pay is not always in proportion may be inferred from a recently published report of a suicide, which concluded with the remark, 'No motive can be assigned for the rash act, as, when the man was picked up, the sum of $7\frac{1}{2}d.$ was found in one of his pockets.' Stories are told of different kinds of reporters—as, for example, of the flowery reporter who plays such sad havoc with the Queen's English, and who concluded the report of a penny reading with the remark that 'On the whole, the entertainment was the most mirth-provoking and soul-stirring that could be had for the money.'"

There have been few more ludicrous errors than that of the reporter who commented on the work of the Church

Mission in a Yorkshire town some years ago, and particularly on the efforts to evangelise the local police. "They marched into the hall," he wrote, "dressed in a uniform of blue and white gloves;" and the whole town smiled and marvelled at the scanty attire of the police. The reporter, so comical was the mistake, laughed as heartily as anybody, and explained the error in this way. In the hurry of writing he had omitted a comma. The sentence should have read, "They marched into the hall dressed in a uniform of blue, and white gloves." "The printer's error" is made the scapegoat of many a reporter's blunder and many an editorial slip; still, the printer's error sometimes has a little diversion on its own account. For instance, the reporter on a northern daily who wrote that the venerable archdeacon advocated "the breaking of bread in the vestry," was rather staggered to find next day in the

newspaper that the venerable archdeacon had "advocated the *breaking of heads* in the vestry!" But the flutter in the amiable clergyman's breast would be only a mild one in contrast to the mingled feelings of the brave warrior who at a meeting in honour of his home-coming from one of our campaigns, was spoken of as "this battle-scarred veteran," transcribed by the reporter as "this battle-scared veteran;" and, with a graceful apology for the printer's error, altered the next day to "this bottle-scarred veteran!"

Sometimes the reporter will report a lecture a week before it is really delivered, or get hold of a last year's concert programme and criticise the singing of vocalists who may not be singing at all now. And the reporter has been known, so erratic is genius, to kill many a man in the newspaper before the man has expired in the flesh.

To his confidence—some people call it assurance—there is no limit ; still, he cannot always avoid awkward positions. Newspaper competition in these days is very keen, and in some instances there is barely time to procure the news, much less carefully verify it. An evening paper not long since published a paragraph announcing the failure of a firm of sharebrokers. After a few copies had been rattled off the machine a doubt arose as to whether the intelligence was accurate, and a reporter went in a hansom to the house of a member of the firm. The stockbroker, unconscious of the notoriety he was achieving in commercial circles, was at dinner. The reporter was a very frank reporter. He rang the bell, was ushered into the hall, sent in his card, and obtained an interview. "Pray excuse me for disturbing you at dinner," he said ; "*but is it true you've failed ?*" It was not true, and that reporter, although

a man of considerable *sang-froid*, regained the hansom speedily.

It is well known on the Press that if a railway disaster occurs the officials of the company know nothing, or often pretend to know nothing, about it. Nearly all are mum! mysterious and mute as the Sphinx. It is difficult to get meat out of a dog's throat; but this is a recreation compared to the task of eliciting information from railway officials as to accidents on the line. The reporter, nevertheless, is obliged to get the information quickly and accurately. Like Major-General Stanley, in the comic opera, he has to rely a good deal on strategy, and a good deal on down-right native impudence. But whatever he relies on he generally obtains the facts.

He has been known to ride to the scene of the accident dressed like one of the breakdown gang. He has been seen at night to slide down a cutting-side, at

the imminent risk of breaking his neck, and alight almost on the funnel of the overturned engine; he has had the audacity to pull the communication cord of the express at a wayside station, get out of the window on the offside of the slowing train, and, while the engine-driver and guard have wondered what was amiss, started on his way up "the six-foot" to the wrecked train, with its shattered carriages and maimed passengers, prolific in facts and "exciting incidents."

An instance of a reporter's temerity and tact was afforded at a tolerably recent railway disaster at Penistone. It was essential that he should get particulars of the accident without delay. But on his way to the scene he found to his disgust that he was in a slow train. The line was blocked with traffic, and the slow train was shunted at one point and at another until the pressman lost all patience, and

decided to quit the carriage at any risk. He got on the footboard, leapt upon the line, and began the perilous walk to the place where the accident had occurred. It was a daring bit of pedestrianism, but he did it without mishap, traversing a tunnel, in going through which he was nearly whisked off his feet by a train. Emerging from the tunnel, his progress was barred by a policeman, who told him he had no business on the line. "I'm a reporter, and wish to get to the scene of the accident," replied the newspaper man. "Well, you won't get this way," remarked the officer severely. "But I've walked a long way down the line—I've just come through that tunnel!" continued the reporter. "What! come through that tunnel! God bless my soul! it's a wonder you weren't cut to pieces! You can go on," said the amazed officer; and then he muttered, "Them reporters is rum chaps, and no mistake."

One of the most agreeable of reporting experiences is to travel to some country town to an important political meeting, take a turn with other reporters at a big speech, get it on the wire before midnight, and then have a pleasant smoke and chat in some old-fashioned inn which was perhaps once a coaching-house, and to which weird stories still cling of haunted chambers and ghosts seen years ago by affrighted travellers through the film of whiskey. And one of the most detestable of reporting experiences is to attend a similar political meeting far away, and be obliged to get back the same night. It is head-aching, eye-straining work for the reporter to transcribe his shorthand notes, for instance, in the guard's van of a fish train, jolting over forty miles of railway, especially when he is expected at the office soon after midnight with his copy "written up," ready to hand in to the printers.

Nor is it pleasant to be "lost in the snow." Such was a chief reporter's experience in Derbyshire several years ago, and he will not soon forget it. After a heavy day's work—which included attending the police-court, reporting a Bible Society meeting, taking a note at a pharmaceutical conference, and writing a notice about a play at the theatre—he was quitting the office with a colleague. Both were fatigued; both eager for bed. But, like George Augustus Sala's hero in *The Key of the Street*, there was no bed for them that night. The chief had just lit his pipe, and was going along the passage that led from the reporters' room to the street, when the messenger—doomed to "walk the night" with news parcels that come by train—came hurrying by.

"What is it, Jim?" he asked. "Glad it's you, sir. Train off the line ten miles south—twenty killed, they say." The last

train south had gone ; but in a few minutes the two reporters were in a hansom driving to the scene of the accident, hoping to get information and be back again at the office in time for the town edition. It was a bitterly cold night. As they drove along the country road snow fell, and soon it drifted so thickly that it was quite impossible to discern the turnpike boundary. The horse, bony as Don Quixote's, stumbled hopelessly on, so worn out that it could neither toss its head in derision nor give a solitary kick at the driver's inexhaustible flow of curses. The poor nag did its best ; but after a wild, desperate movement of the legs, prompting the delusive hope that it was going to trot, the tired steed came to a sudden stop. "Get on—get on!" urged the reporters, whose teeth were chattering and limbs shivering with cold. "It's no — use," said the exasperated driver ; "t' horse is

dead beat, an' ar don't know t' road." The driver had trusted to their knowledge of the locality; they had been relying on his frequent journeying along the highway—and were "lost in the snow." They managed to drag the horse and hansom to the four lane-ends close by. One of the reporters mounted the roof of the vehicle, and endeavoured, by a reckless sacrifice of wax matches (a score of which took one look at the wild night and then died in despair), to find the letters on the arms of the weather-beaten guide-post. But it was in vain. The howling wind had blown all the letters off—the worm-eaten woodwork bore not a vestige either of place-name or distance.

The only thing they were certain about was the time. It was three o'clock in the morning. In another half-hour the formes in the daily newspaper office in the big town yonder would be on the machines,

and the papers whirling into the folders, without any account of the "Fearful Railway Accident." The dilemma was annoying. There was nothing for it but to tramp on in the hope of reaching the scene of the accident and getting facts for a special edition. It was a struggle through the snowdrifts piled high in the narrow lane they now traversed, and along which they had been tempted by a locomotive's shriek in the distance. After half-an-hour's pedestrian struggling, their hearts were gladdened by the outline of the railway track: then they met a muffled-up figure, covered with snow, a burly figure, safety-lamp in his hand, on his way to the pit.

"Ar reckon there's been summat on 't' line," he said; and he told them the station was a little to the right after turning the end of the lane. On they pressed, forgetting in their zeal for work the miserable experiences they had gone through. As

they neared the station, they thought, such is the force of reporting habit, of the attractive heading they would give to the account of the disaster :—

TERRIBLE RAILWAY COLLISION.

AN EXPRESS WRECKED.

TWENTY PASSENGERS KILLED AND MANY INJURED.

They listened, expecting to hear the shouts of the breakdown gang; looked for the huge fires that are lighted at night on embankment or in cutting whenever a serious accident occurs, and the work of rescue and clearing the line is not completed. They pictured to themselves the great locomotive lying throbbing, helpless, on its side; the line twisted, and strewn with broken carriages; the goods train shattered, knocked hither and thither by the tearing might of the express; the anxious,

tear-stained faces of friends ; the quickly moving groups of officials and ready helpers ; the doctors aiding the injured ; and the sad scene in the farmhouse by the line-side where the dead were no doubt lying—father and son, mother and child, sent by the piteous crash into the silent land.

Eagerly they entered the station. The lights were on “at danger,” but the platform was deserted and the shed-like booking office in darkness. The big railway disaster was a myth. The accident was not worth a paragraph. Two trucks had jumped off the line—and the signalman was asleep !

One of the most amusing incidents connected with modern reporting concerns a prelate who is as robust in form as he is indefatigable in work. He went to open a church in a certain village. A reporter was sent to give an account of the opening services ; but the place was somewhat difficult to get at, and he did not reach

the edifice until the dignitary had entered the pulpit. The church was crowded. The rustics listened with reverence to the preacher's words. The silence, except for the prelate's utterances, was intense. You could, to use an old saying, have heard a pin drop. The reporter was perplexed. His conscience told him he must not wait on ceremony. He must catch the next train back, or his journey would be useless; and he could not well go without getting some information about the building. So he stood and pondered. Then he took out his book, wrote a note to the churchwarden sitting in the central aisle near the pulpit, and, beckoning to one of the village boys crowding about the church door, asked him to take the note "to the gentleman with the bald head," pointing to the churchwarden. The note was simply a courteously worded missive asking the churchwarden for a few facts about the dimensions of the

church and its cost—such a note as any reporter would have sent in a similar difficulty. The lad took the note and walked up the central aisle towards the churchwarden. But to his horror—his dismay—the reporter noticed that the boy wore clogs. Clank—clank—clank went the lad up the aisle, making a fearful noise at every footstep. The congregation was aghast, everybody's eyes were on the confused youngster tramping so loudly on sacred ground. Suddenly the prelate stopped his discourse. Sternly he looked at the sacrilegious lad—then glanced with scornful pity at the injudicious reporter, and, in sonorous tones that penetrated to every part of the church, said: "Boy, boy! go back, go back! I do not blame you so much as the miserable man that sent you!"

The reporter has been in many embarrassing situations. Only lately at Bow Street, during a noted police case, the

pressure was so great that several members of the Press had to be provided with seats in the dock. Two witnesses, asked to identify the persons concerned in the charge, pointed, without hesitation, to "the blushing reporters." At the Sheriff's Court, at York Castle, some years ago, a reporter was heartily hissed by a group of women. He happened to enter the court with the barrister who held the brief for the defendant in a breach of promise of marriage case, and the indignant females thought the guileless reporter was the faithless lover.

Dr. Wordsworth, the late Bishop of Lincoln, succeeded, perhaps, in placing the reporter in the most embarrassing position of all. A gentleman of the Press went down from a northern daily to the cathedral city to report his lordship's charge. It was a long, dreary charge. The reporter took notes of what he regarded as the most important passages, but even

these notes, as the time went by and the charge droned on, assumed formidable proportions. At last the note-taker gave up in despair, and resolved to rely on the bishop's copy of the charge, if he could only get it. Waiting patiently, he obtained an interview with the bishop. "I will give you a copy of the charge with pleasure," said Dr. Wordsworth, "if you will follow me to the house." Another eager reporter was standing near on the same quest. His lordship's crosier, in the meantime, had been taken in pieces, and deposited in a box somewhat resembling a small coffin. Suddenly the bishop turned to the pressmen, and staggered them by the request that they should carry the coffin. They were too well bred to refuse. They each took hold of a handle, got somehow into the cathedral aisle, and walked as sedately as they could at the bishop's heels, though conscious of many a sly, humorous look

from straggling clergymen and asthmatic vergers, one of whom made his exit from the fabric wildly, trying to stifle his coughing-laugh with a mouthful of his black gown.

These stories (and they might easily be outstripped by the experience of nearly every daily newspaper reporter in the country) show that the reporter has many difficulties to encounter, and gets his share of hard work—that though he has many a glimpse of gaiety, he is also inured to toil.

What will be expected of him in the next decade or two it is impossible to say, so restless is modern newspaper enterprise. It is not improbable that the shorthand writer will become of less value to the daily newspaper. It may be that verbatim reports of the proceedings in our law courts, of the transactions of public bodies, and even of political speeches, will become almost obsolete in the rush of modern

life—that they will nearly die out because people have neither time nor inclination to read them. The law reporter, shaking off the sleepy quietude of the Chancery Court, may develop a new and startling phase of interviewing. The day may come when the gentlemen in the reporters' gallery of the House of Commons, except in great crises, will give little more than descriptive sketches of debates, and abandon, to a great extent, the present practice of reporting—of giving speech after speech, to the gratification of hon. members, but often to the disgust of the business man and the ordinary reader, and sometimes to the consternation of the political chief himself.

The reporter will probably be required to cultivate some special subject, in addition to his wide, varied knowledge—to become a literary authority on commerce, or industry, or science, or social reform, or

sport, and he may also be expected to develop into an artist-journalist. But whatever is required of him will not be required in vain. He has, notwithstanding some errors, done his work well in the past; and with his capacity for toil, his undoubted talent, and imperturbable good-humour, he will, no doubt, be always able to hold his own in the battle of life. Indeed, his confidence is not bounded by the limits of this world—he views his prospects in the next with tolerable complacency; for, not long ago, a pressman, asked solemnly, amid the fervid excitement of a revival gathering, the momentous question, “Are you saved?” replied, in a calm, confident tone, “Oh no; *I’m* a reporter!”



VIII.

Writings on Newspapers and
Reporters.



CHAPTER VIII.

WRITINGS ON REPORTERS AND NEWSPAPERS.

 HERE is a mass of literature referring to reporters, to the shorthand systems they use, to newspaper writers, and the various departments of press work. Among these writings may be mentioned :—

Gentleman's Magazine, vol. for the year 1740.

✓ *The Fourth Estate* :—Contributions towards a history of newspapers, and the liberty of the press, by F. Knight Hunt (2 vols.).

London: David Bogue, 86, Fleet Street,
1850.

- ✓ Andrews' *History of British Journalism, from the Foundation of the Newspaper Press in England to the Repeal of the Stamp Act, with Sketches of Press Celebrities*:—2 volumes, published by Richard Bentley, London, in 1859.

- ✓ *The Newspaper Press*:—Its origin, progress, and present position, by James Grant, author of *Random Recollections*, *The Great Metropolis*, and late editor of the *Morning Advertiser* (2 vols.). London: George Routledge & Sons, 1871.

The Metropolitan Weekly and Provincial Press, by the same writer.

English Journalism, and the Men who have

Made It, by Charles Pebody. London :
Cassell, Petter, Galpin, & Co., 1882.

Journalistic London:—Being a series of sketches of famous pens and papers of the day, by Joseph Hatton. London : Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, Crown Buildings, 188, Fleet Street, 1882.

Reference is also made to the debates in Parliament in D'Ewes' *Journals of Queen Elizabeth* ; Rushworth's *Historical Collections* ; *The Political State*, a pamphlet published monthly in Queen Anne's time ; *The Historical Register*, issued in the reign of George I. ; May's *Constitutional History of England* ; Wade's *British History* ; and Green's *Short History of the English People*.

A writer in the *Journalist* gives a list of references to the same subjects in magazine literature, and these include:—

All the Year Round.—"My Newspaper," June 25, 1864, vol. 11, p. 473:—A brief description of a visit to a newspaper office.

"Press Telegrams," March 1, 1873, vol. 29, p. 365:—Particulars of the method of transmitting press telegrams.

Atlantic Monthly.—"Journalism and Journalists," by F. B. Sanborn, July, 1874, vol. 34, p. 55:—Power of the newspaper, origin of newspapers, modern American journalism, scholarship in modern journalism, women as journalists, rarity of able editors, bribing of journalists, literary style in newspapers, slander in newspapers, the aim of journalism.

Belgravia.—"Writing for Money," by G. H. Guest, June, 1869, vol. 8, p. 573:—Hard work of writers in periodicals, value of a name in authorship, writing

on distasteful subjects, writing when labouring under mental affliction.

"English Journalism in 1832 and 1874," by T. H. S. Escott, Nov., 1875, vol. 28, p. 39 :—A. Fonblanque, Journalism in the eighteenth century, political offices for journalists, influence of journalism on the dialect of ordinary life, party journalism, dulness of modern leaders.

"Does Writing Pay?" probably by P. Fitzgerald, Jan., 1881, vol. 43, p. 283 :—Getting subjects for essays, showering in papers, value of establishment on a journal, turning travels to good profit, novel-writing, value of having several irons in the fire, fraudulent publishers, verse-making not profitable, cost of printers' corrections.

Blackwood :—"Journalists and Magazine-Writers," Jan., 1879, vol. 125, p. 69 :—

Society journalism condemned, city editors, financial weeklies, starting and editing magazines, the quarterly reviews.

"Magazine-Writers," Feb., 1879, vol. 125, p. 225 :—History of *Blackwood's Magazine*, signed articles in newspapers, reviewing, magazine poetry, starting new magazines, illustrated magazines, religious magazines.

"Readers," Aug., 1879, vol. 126, p. 235 :—Different kinds of readers, account of the publication of a newspaper, morning newspaper trains, railway bookstalls, reviewing, reading in railway carriages, on shipboard, and on holidays.

"Newspaper Offices," Oct., 1879, vol. 126, p. 472 :—Newspapers as commercial enterprises, newspaper offices as they used to be and as they are now, history of the leading London papers, Parisian newspapers, American newspapers, the *Kölnische Zeitung*.

British Quarterly:—"The Modern Newspaper," April, 1872, vol. 55, p. 348:—Account of the growth of newspapers, sale of papers during Franco-German war, Smith's bookstalls, increased dependence on advertisements, Reuter's agency, deterioration of reporting ability, evening papers virtually extinct, growth of provincial press, the Press Association, special wires, penny-a-lining in London, cockneyism of London papers, comic and illustrated papers, colonial and continental papers.

Chambers's Journal:—"How we get our Newspaper," Dec. 9, 1865, vol. 42, p. 769:—Description of the *Times* office, and account of the distribution of papers. "Our Leading Columns," July 20, 1867, vol. 44, p. 449:—Leaders and leader-writers. "Scissors and Paste," Dec. 14, 1867,

- vol. 44, p. 785 :—Account of sub-editorial work and perplexities.
- “The Special Staff,” Jan. 11, 1873, vol. 50, p. 17 :—The use of the telegraph by special correspondents.
- “Literary Work,” June 7, 1879, vol. 56, p. 353 :—Increase of periodicals, course of a successful novel, international copyright.
- “A Newspaper Institute,” June 21, 1879, vol. 56, p. 395 :—Account of a newspaper institute at Crewe.
- “Sub-Editing a London Newspaper,” Oct. 18, 1879, vol. 56, p. 663 :—Duties of a sub-editor, police reports, preparation of biographies.
- “Concerning Reporting,” Jan. 15, 1881, vol. 58, p. 36 :—Shorthand not enough for reporting, qualifications of a reporter.
- “Literary Beginners,” Jan. 29, 1881, vol. 58, p. 65 :—Revision of articles, organisation of journalism.

- "Curiosities of Journalism," Feb. 19, 1881, vol. 58, p. 123:—Inconsistency in newspapers, dressing up news, libel actions, smartness in journalistic enterprise, feats of interviewing, fighting editors.
- "Printers' Blunders," June 11, 1881, vol. 58, p. 381:—Several instances given.

Contemporary Review:—"The Morality of Literary Art," by H. A. Page, June, 1867, vol. 5, p. 161:—Relations of art and morality, law of truth in art, sympathy in literary art, reserve in literary art.

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This list of the works on journalists and journalism is by no means complete ; but it will suffice to indicate how interesting is the topic.

Book-lovers leaning more to the rise and development of shorthand than to newspaper enterprise will find in the Bailey collection of shorthand books, in the Manchester Reference Library, a wide field of knowledge, in which they can roam unfettered, making delightful acquaintance with much curious literature, and learning something, too, of a remote time when the manners and customs of the people were very different from those of our own day ; yet of a time when the English mind, awaking and throbbing with new possibilities, was on the threshold of modern

invention and scientific research, of wondrous industrial activity and trade development, of wider and truer social reform, and of greater political freedom.



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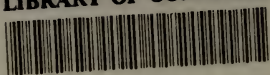
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